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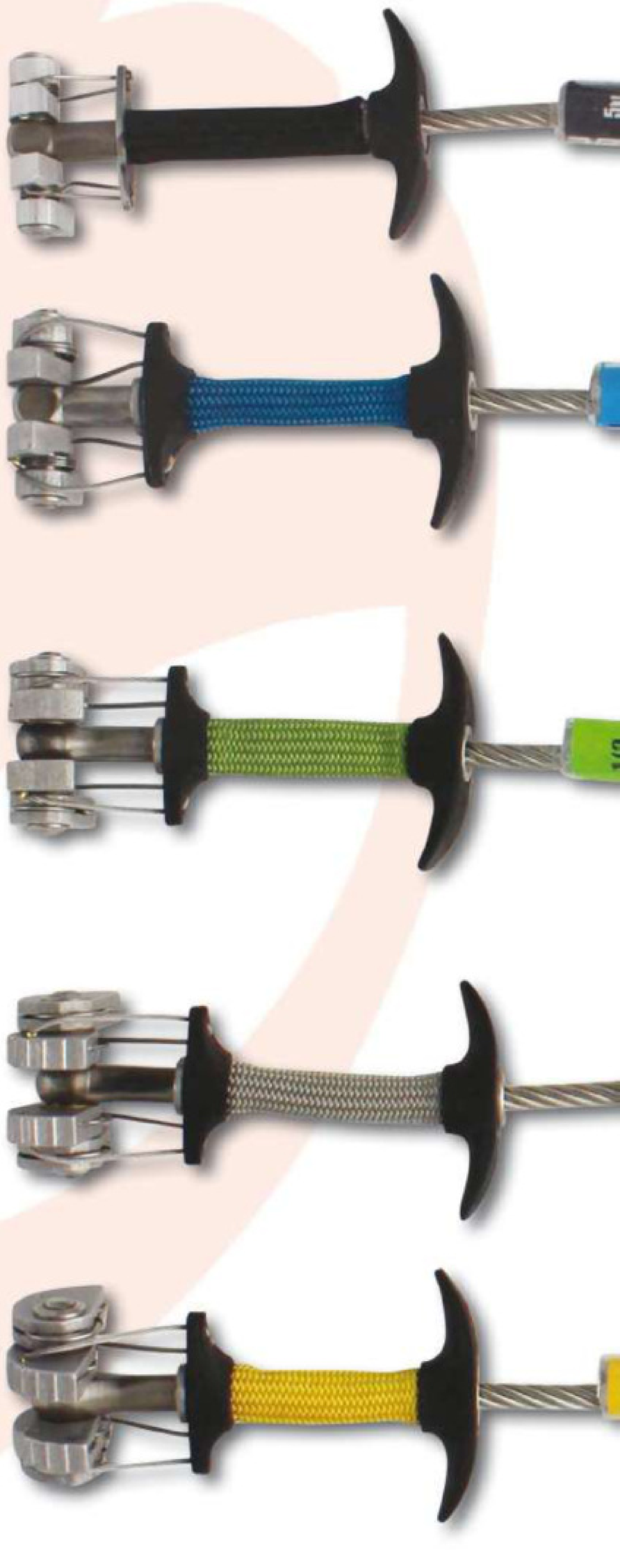
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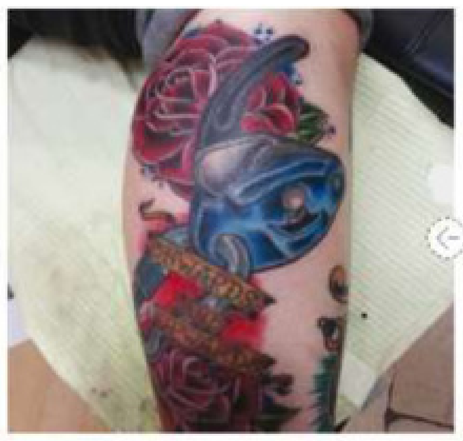
20% Reduced Head Profile



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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JULIE ELLISON; COURTESY; BLAKE MCCORD; BRETT AFFRUNTI; JULIE ELLISON

Cover photo by Jon Glassberg: In early November 2014, Jorg Verhoeven snagged the first non-American ascent of the 32-pitch Nose *(5.14a) on El Capitan.*

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The 420-foot *Chupacabras* (WI4) at the Shape Shifter Wall in Zion is "a true beauty," according to photographer Andrew Burr. He says, "The bottom half formed thin and did not take a screw until the belay 80 meters up—a bold lead."

ANDREW BURR



56 2014 Golden Piton Awards
For the 13th year, *Climbing* highlights the biggest, baddest, and boldest ascents, climbers, and events in the past year in climbing. Editor-at-large **Dougald MacDonald** delves into the inspiration and motivation behind the people who are pushing our sport forward in meaningful and mind-boggling ways.

70 Zion Ice
This breathtaking utopia of Southwest sandstone is probably the last place you'd expect to find countless world-class ice routes, but that's exactly what one crew discovered in early 2014. Photographer **Andrew Burr** visited with some hungry Utah locals to document the best lines, from 60 feet of fun to 600 feet of fright.

80 American ~~Cancer~~ Climber Society
Senior editor **Julie Ellison** tagged along with Denver-based nonprofit First Descents on a weeklong climbing trip to Moab, Utah, where nine young adult cancer survivors and fighters used climbing to take back their lives from a vicious disease that robbed them of some of their best years.

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Climbing

LEADING SINCE 1970

Q: What was your greatest climbing-related achievement in the past year?

Turning my little boy into a climber. Now, when I tell him we're going on an adventure, he asks, "Do I need my helmet? Are we going twyming?"

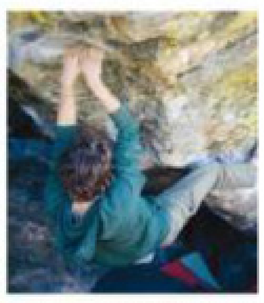




Moving from Manhattan to Boulder, Colorado! Now I can be on a route after just 10 minutes of driving, instead of a 30-minute subway ride, then a two-hour bus ride, then a 10-minute hitchhike.

I climbed my first big wall!

Sending *Tommy's Arête* (V7) in Lower Chaos Canyon, and doing a one-arm pull-up (then consequently suffering from tendonitis in my elbow).



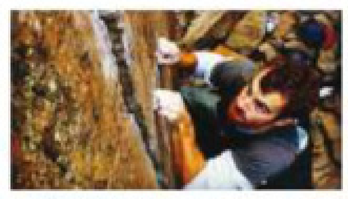
Sufferfest 2! Riding bikes 760 miles through four states and climbing 45 desert towers.

Learning to accept failure. A lot!

Four probable new routes in five days in Wyoming's Bighorn Mountains.



Best climbing was at Wild Iris, WY; but my best sends were *Gym Arête* (5.12a) at Shelf Road and *Wet Dream* (5.12a) in Clear Creek, CO.



A daring approach-shoe onsight solo. It was the second ascent of *Wisdom Tooth* (5.7, 20'), Holy Cross Wilderness, CO. The crux was the descent, a heinous dead-branch squeeze chimney—you know the kind.

Summiting Mt. Whitney via *The Mountaineer's Route* less than 24 hours after completing my first Ironman.



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FLASH

Caroline Ciavaldini and James Pearson
Unnamed
El Nido, Palawan, Philippines

With 7,107 individual islands in the Philippines, there's endless rock towering over water, and Caroline Ciavaldini and James Pearson had exactly that in mind when they targeted that part of the world for a climbing trip. Pearson says, "We came with the intention of discovering new deep water solos, but we got way more than we bargained for with hundreds of craggy islands jutting directly out of the deep, crystal-clear water." When putting the trip together, the couple dreamed of kayaking from island to island, climbing all day, and sleeping on beaches at night. What they quickly found was that a full kayaking adventure didn't lead to the best climbing adventure. Chalk, shoes, and skin never fully dried out, they were both completely exhausted and fatigued from kayaking several hours a day, and unstable kayaks didn't provide the best means to film a climbing expedition. Luckily, they were able to rent a boat that would carry them and their gear around, which not only meant more climbing in a day, but it also allowed them to explore more and farther-flung areas. (Find beta and topos at *onceuponaclimb.co.uk*.) Although DWS was the main goal, there were a few places where the water was not deep enough, so they climbed the routes anyway using trad gear. Pearson describes the two contrasting styles by saying, "Perhaps the overriding beauty of these two very different approaches is how they both leave no trace."

FRANCISCO TARANTO, JR. / THE NORTH FACE / EDELRID

Jorg Verhoeven
The Nose (5.14a)
El Capitan, Yosemite Valley, California

SuperTopo describes it best: "Long, sustained, and flawless, the *Nose* may be the best rock climb in the world; it is certainly the best known." Another way to describe it might be elusive—while many parties aid climb this iconic line every year, there were only three free ascents (Lynn Hill, Scott Burke, and the duo Tommy Caldwell and Beth Rodden) until early November 2014, when 29-year-old Dutch climber Jorg Verhoeven topped out after three days of working the route. Verhoeven, who now lives in Austria, is an all-around crusher with 5.14d ascents and multiple World Cup podium finishes. He, his partner Mark Amann, and photographer Jon Glassberg spent three days camping on top of El Cap so he could rap in and jug out while working the two crux pitches: The Great Roof (pitch 24) and Changing Corners (pitch 28). Glassberg called the event "a massive undertaking." He says, "500 meters of fixed lines, food, water, and camera gear packed in and out each day. Jorg spent equal time working the moves on each pitch, but he had significantly more trouble with Changing Corners." After witnessing the preparations, hard work, and success of the send, Glassberg gleaned some insight as to why there have been so few free ascents of this behemoth: "1) It's incredibly hard to work since the cruxes are at pitches 24 and 28. It's a huge pain to get there and project those sections. 2) The Great Roof is often wet. 3) Changing Corners is an intricate and delicate dance with crazy scumming, smearing, and body positioning that take a long time to work out. It goes into the sun at 11 a.m., which makes it too hot and pretty much impossible. 4) There are a ton of people climbing the route every day, and you have to wait for parties to pass while working it. 5) The weather is unpredictable—we had 50 mph gusts for 10 hours on our first day on the wall. 6) Finding a partner that wants to belay for four days is not easy. 7) It's 32 pitches long!"

JON GLASSBERG

FLASH

Anne Peick
Gimps and Wimps (5.10)
Labyrinth Canyon, Utah

Over the course of a week in April 2013, a group of seven climbers from Bishop, California, and Lander, Wyoming, teamed up to float the Green River through Labyrinth Canyon and put up new routes. All told, they floated 45 miles and ticked a few dozen first ascents, including this stellar 5.10, so-named because of the multiple injuries and mental hang-ups had by the team before the start of the trip (elbow tendonitis, an ACL injury, a sprained ankle, and an aversion to crack climbing, just to name a few). Although a few well-known groups had traveled down this canyon previously, most notably our own Andrew Burr, Rob Pizem, Peter Vintoniv, and Orin Salah in 2009, this expedition added several more river miles and routes. Party member Jared Spaulding summed the experience up well in a trip report: "We float down river. We look at cracks, and we get inspired. Boating straight is hard when constantly spinning, turning, looking up, and using binoculars."

KEN ETZEL



Tommy Rigby
The Big Guy (V3)
Little Cottonwood Canyon, Utah

Only a few steps from Little Cottonwood Canyon Road, this aptly named problem towers 30 feet over the creek with laser-cut features and an airy topout that could give even veteran highballers sweaty palms. Speculation is that this granite boulder and its uncharacteristic pockmark holds are the result of past roadwork demolition or quarrying, but regardless, it lends itself to fun climbing on good holds. Although the bouldering might rank behind the numerous and more well-known trad, sport, and even ice climbing this canyon has to offer, the smaller blocks are really high-quality with outstanding rock, usually flat landings, and plentiful tall lines to keep things spicy. Due to the extremely smooth nature of the area's granite, the movement tends to be more smeary and delicate, with few actual holds to pull down on. Local climber Tommy Rigby has helped to popularize Little Cottonwood Canyon with two videos ***(climbing.com/lcc-bouldering)*** that showcase some of the superb problems. In one video, Rigby takes a 30-foot digger from the topout of *Blue Steel* (V8), a technical, insecure dance on a featureless arête to an intricate mantel. Photographer Ryan Wedemeyer says, "The clip where Tommy falls—without a spotter—from high on the crux, then gets back on and sends, is legendary."

RYAN WEDEMEYER

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Mt. Olympus 2013. *Michelle Miller photo*

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THE APPROACH



Davis says yes to a first ascent of 11,901-foot Nez Perce in Grand Teton National Park.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The Year of Yeah

BY SHANNON DAVIS

This issue, our first of 2015, is when we do what most folks do at the beginning of a new year—think about how weak and fat we are. Kidding. We're a bunch of beanpoles. Plus, at *Climbing*, beneath our prickly, wise-ass exteriors, we're firm believers in accentuating the positive. There's real value in looking back on the previous year to choose the big highlights and be re-inspired by them as we look ahead to climbing even more this year.

When we dug in to choose winners for our 13th annual Golden Piton Awards (p. 56), which honor the most notable climbs and climbers of the past year, however, there weren't as many obvious standouts as in years past. But just under the surface of what seemed like a year of incremental gains were thrilling ascents by big names and relative unknowns alike. How cool is that? We tend to consider the "year in climbing" on grander scales like these, but also (and more importantly) on personal levels: What were *my* highlights and how can I get more of that stuff next year?

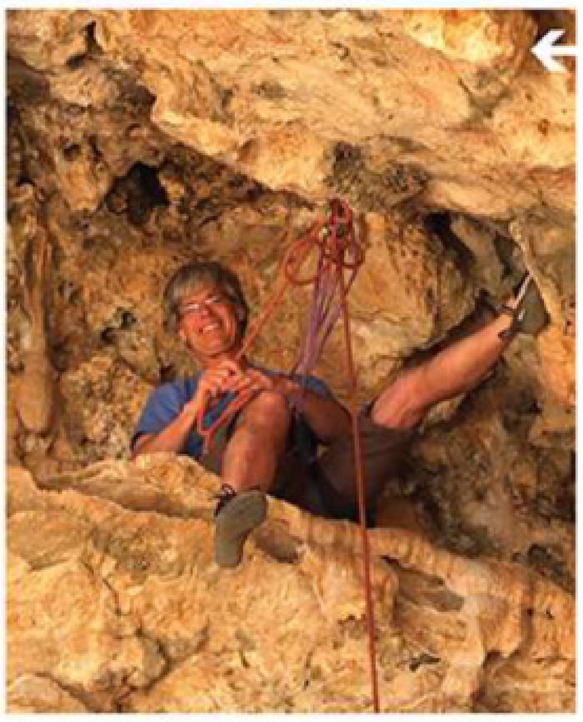
For me, it wasn't a year of chasing grades but simply climbing more, which as a dad, husband, and full-time office dude, is a true success. I hit the Rockies, the Tetons, the Winds, the French and Swiss Alps, Smith Rock, and a half-dozen Chattanooga-area crags. Our little staff climbed together more than ever, too, in Boulder and Clear Creek canyons and quick gym sessions at our favorite local haunt, The Spot. The result? More laughs, better friendships, more experience, more fun. The lesson? Embrace your climbing addiction, and say yes every time.

CONTRIBUTORS

JULIE ELLISON



From studio to field shots, from writing gear reviews to feature stories, there's little our senior editor can't do. In "American ~~Cancer~~ Climber Society" (p. 80), she followed a group of cancer survivors on a climbing trip to Moab. "I was moved to see how climbing can transform the lives of those who deserve it so much," she says. "Few sports have such an immediate and lasting impact."



DOUGALD MACDONALD

MacDonald has been covering climbing news professionally since 1995, first for *Rock & Ice* and now for *Climbing* and the *American Alpine Journal*, where he serves as executive editor—which means there's no one more qualified to pen our annual Golden Piton Awards (p. 56). "Once I started poring over the year's news, I realized 2014 was packed with impressive ascents, including many by less-famous climbers, which was all the more inspiring."

BEN RUECK



Colorado native Rueck "didn't know climbing existed" until he wandered into a climbing gym at age 16. He was instantly hooked. In this issue, this boulderer-turned-badass-big waller summarizes his greatest piece of advice to aspiring climbers: how to get out of your comfort zone (p. 26). "I realized that to grow as a climber and as a person, you need to find and exceed your boundaries."

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JULIE ELLISON; ALTON RICHARDSON; COURTESY; ANDREW BURR; COURTESY

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE JOURNEY

Eliminating failure
My favorite advice in this entire issue: "If you learn from mistakes and maintain a positive attitude, there is no failure. Not achieving a goal isn't failing. It's just a baseline for trying again." (p. 27)

Raising Arizona
I lived in northern Arizona for years and, until now, haven't regretted a single moment. The Grand Canyon State rocks! But after learning more about Tucson's climbing scene (p. 28), I'm kicking myself for not venturing south. Mount Lemmon? Cochise Stronghold? Plentiful burritos? Nice temps? Let's go now!

Living the dream?
Cedar Wright's inside look at pro climbing shows it isn't all roses.



Giving cancer the bird
As a climber, you know how playing on the rocks and getting into the mountains have the power to change lives. Now imagine the magnitude that effect might have on someone who just beat, or is still fighting, a terminal disease. Inspiration starts on page 80.

THE APPROACH

VIRTUAL DISCUSSION

The September 29 edition of Unbelayvable, which included the story of a mother pulling down rope for her two children at the same time in the gym without any belay device, prompted an interesting debate. Is it a brand-new climber's responsibility to know if they're doing something dangerous? Or is it the gym's responsibility to educate everyone who walks through the doors? Find the article and more Unbelayvable at www.climbing.com/unbelayvable-archives.

→A gym can't be responsible for every act of stupidity that happens inside of it. They can't be watching everyone 100% of the time.

Dan Africk – 09/29/2014 8:19:05

→The blame lies with the gym and the instructor. The mother does not know what she does not know. We cannot assume idiocy. The culprit is the person who is employed to know and has the responsibility to pass on that knowledge.

Adam – 09/29/2014 8:44:12

→The mother may be dumb as an eggplant. Still, she was uneducated in the importance of safety and the correct way to belay. She had no idea. It is up to the gym to ensure all belayers are qualified to belay.

Pamela Rosella – 09/29/2014 8:56:41

→I feel that experienced climbers have a responsibility to get involved when someone is doing something that can endanger others—especially with kids!

Seth Rodriguez – 09/30/14 7:53:29

→A gym can have all the policies, rules, and regulations in the world, and you'll still see moronic parents doing stuff like this. It's amazing how careless some parents are with their children's lives. They only have themselves to blame for letting their kids climb up a wall unprotected while they nonchalantly play with their iPhone.

Jay Corban – 10/01/14 4:41:02

→If you're not going to take the time to be safe, then go bowling.

John Simzisko – 10/01/14 7:09:14

KEEP IN TOUCH

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CONSENSUS

Have you ever climbed internationally?

45% Yes

"Does Texas Count?" No.

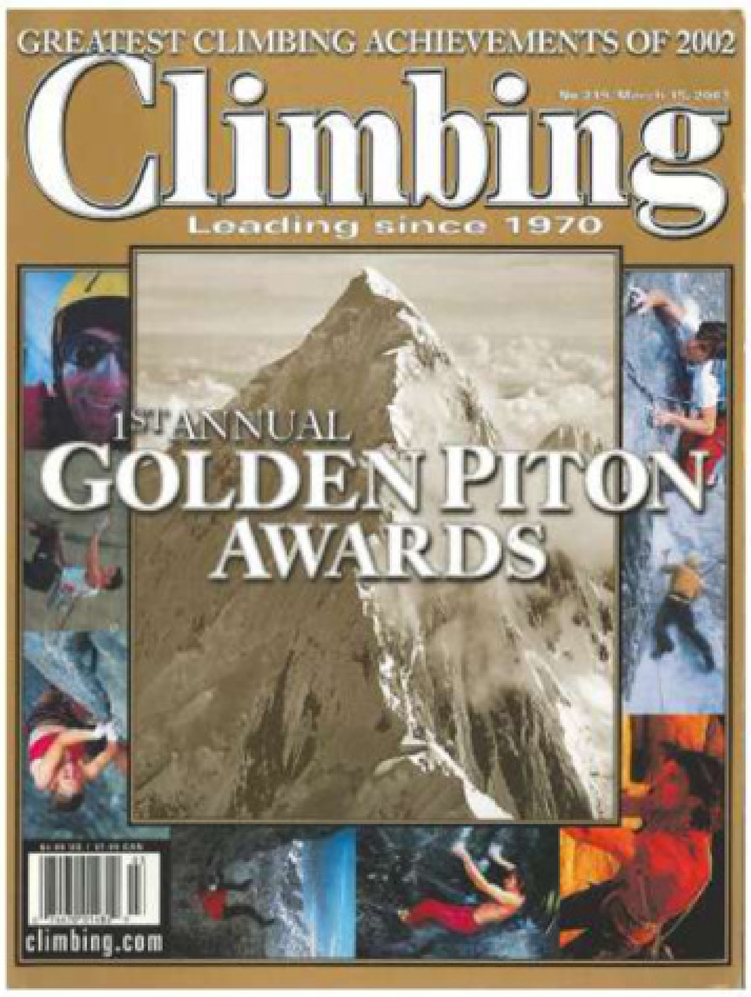
5 MOST POPULAR CLIMBING DESTINATIONS:

1. Canada
2. France
3. Mexico
4. Spain
5. Thailand

ARCHIVES

Golden Piton Awards: A Look Back

Climbing's Golden Piton Awards celebrate the most significant achievements in our sport. Here are just a few of the inaugural winners from 2003.



MARCH 2003

SPORT CLIMBING: JOSUNE BEREZIARTU

Today there are many strong women climbing hard sport routes, but in 2002, Spain's Josune Bereziartu was clearly ahead of the pack. We awarded Bereziartu our first ever Golden Piton Award for sport climbing after she became the first woman to climb 5.14d with her ascent of *Bain de Sang* in Saint Loup, Switzerland. At the time, she was still the only woman to have climbed 5.14c. In 2005, she'd go on to become the first woman to climb 5.14d/5.15a when she redpointed *Bimbaluna*, also in Saint Loup. Both routes have since been downgraded by recent ascensionists. Either way, Bereziartu made some incredible achievements and helped pave the way for the female crushers of today.

SOLO AND BIG WALL: DEAN POTTER

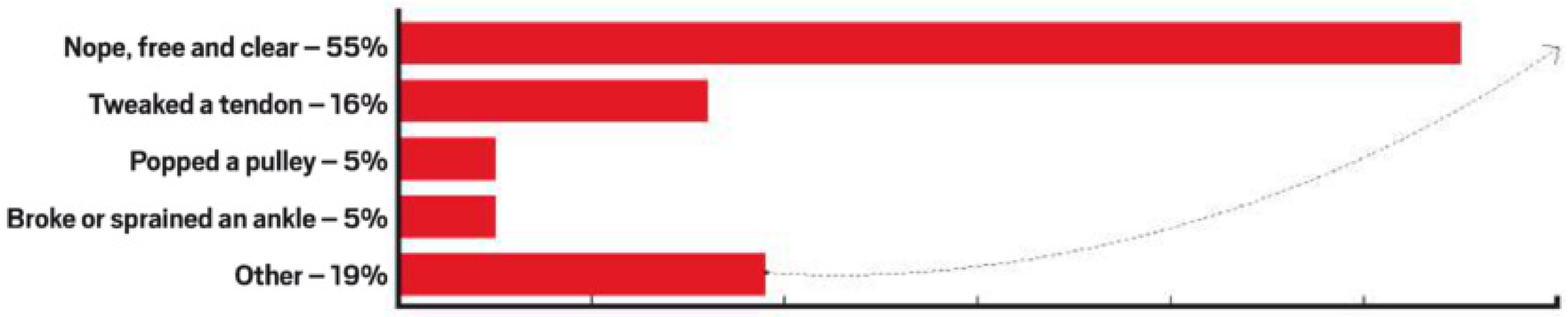
It's no surprise that Dean Potter won a Golden Piton Award for his free ascents of Half Dome and El Cap in a day. Potter's career has always centered around his big wall pursuits, but what people often forget is that Potter has also made some notable alpine achievements: We awarded him a second Golden Piton that year for his solo ascents in Patagonia in 2002. Potter made not one, but two successful solo climbs of the elusive Fitz Roy, and he set a new speed record for Cerro Torre.

HUMANITARIAN SERVICE: GREG MORTENSON

As the story goes, Greg Mortenson dedicated himself to building schools in poor Pakistani villages after a failed attempt to summit K2. Mortenson started a charity to support his cause, and he wrote two best-selling books about his experiences. Unfortunately, this superlative has become steeped in controversy. Author Jon Krakauer, an initial supporter of Mortenson, has since tried to discredit the purported humanitarian. He went so far as to write a book asserting that many of Mortenson's stories are false, that he has not built all the schools he's claimed, and that he's misused his foundation's funding.

OBVIOUS LINES

Did you suffer a climbing injury in 2014?



*Source: Climbing *reader survey. Join at* climbing.com/readerpanel.

OTHER:

→"Belayer's neck."

→"Just skin boo-boos."

→"Neck injury. F***ing yoga inversions." (Ed.: Stop doing yoga. It's dangerous.)

→"I'm too superstitious to answer this question."

RE-GRAM

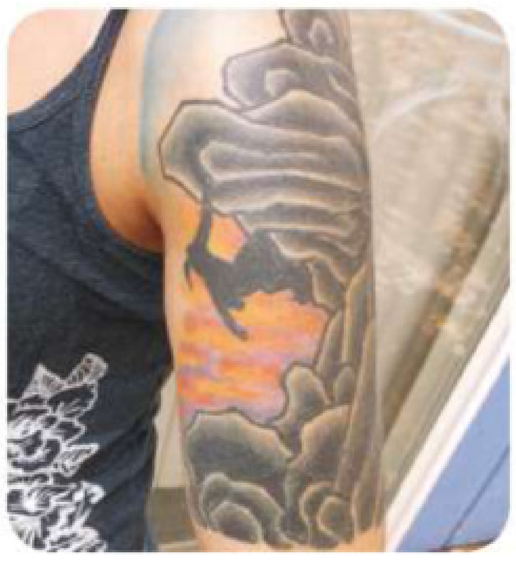
#ClimbingTattoos

If you're reading this magazine, it's probably safe to assume that climbing has left a permanent mark on you, an invisible impression that shapes the way you see and experience the world. Some choose to supplement those marks with permanent visible reminders of their passion for rock ascension via tattoos. Here are just a few selects, provided by our readers.



I have two tattoos related to the two things I love to do the most: yoga and climbing. I didn't want it to be too obvious, so non-climbers always ask what it is.

@zsuzsisaitz



I got this with the idea of a silhouette of a female climber at sunrise. I'm amazed by this work of art. It was all done freehand by Craig Brown at Historic Tattoo Society in Portland.

@bianca761



This tattoo is of an illustration from one of the first Swedish instructional climbing books. It was that book that made me start climbing at the age of 15.

@toothkillah



I did this tattoo on a friend that climbs a lot. It has the power of the rock with the beauty of death all rolled into one.

@jipitatu



One of my first times touching real rock was at Red Rocks. This a reminder of that major milestone in my life, and the beauty of the environment. This was done by @tattoocloud.

@dsrandom



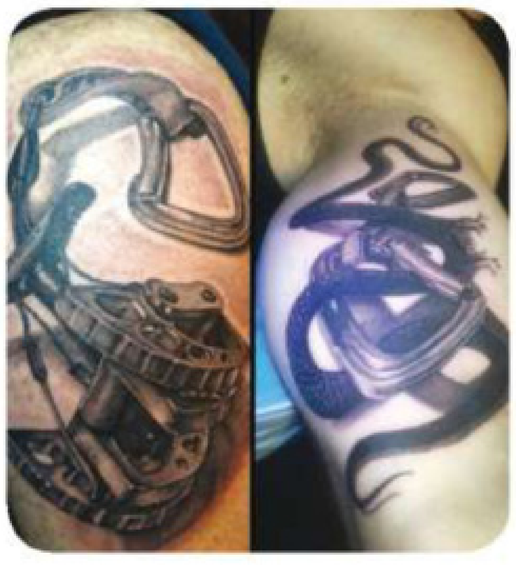
Climbing played a big role in the positivity in my life. Tattoo was done by @tattoocloud at Ink Obsession in Kitchener, Ontario. It was based on a drawing by @artbypawly.

@ecott



This tattoo is an expression of my love for climbing, hiking, and being in the wilderness. That's Mount Rainier from Reflection Lake. This will eventually encompass my whole back.

@hubhiker



I'm a climber and tattoo artist with a small studio in Halifax, Nova Scotia. I messaged Alex Honnold because that dirt squirrel needs some ink. I'd tattoo him for a piggyback ride up El Cap.

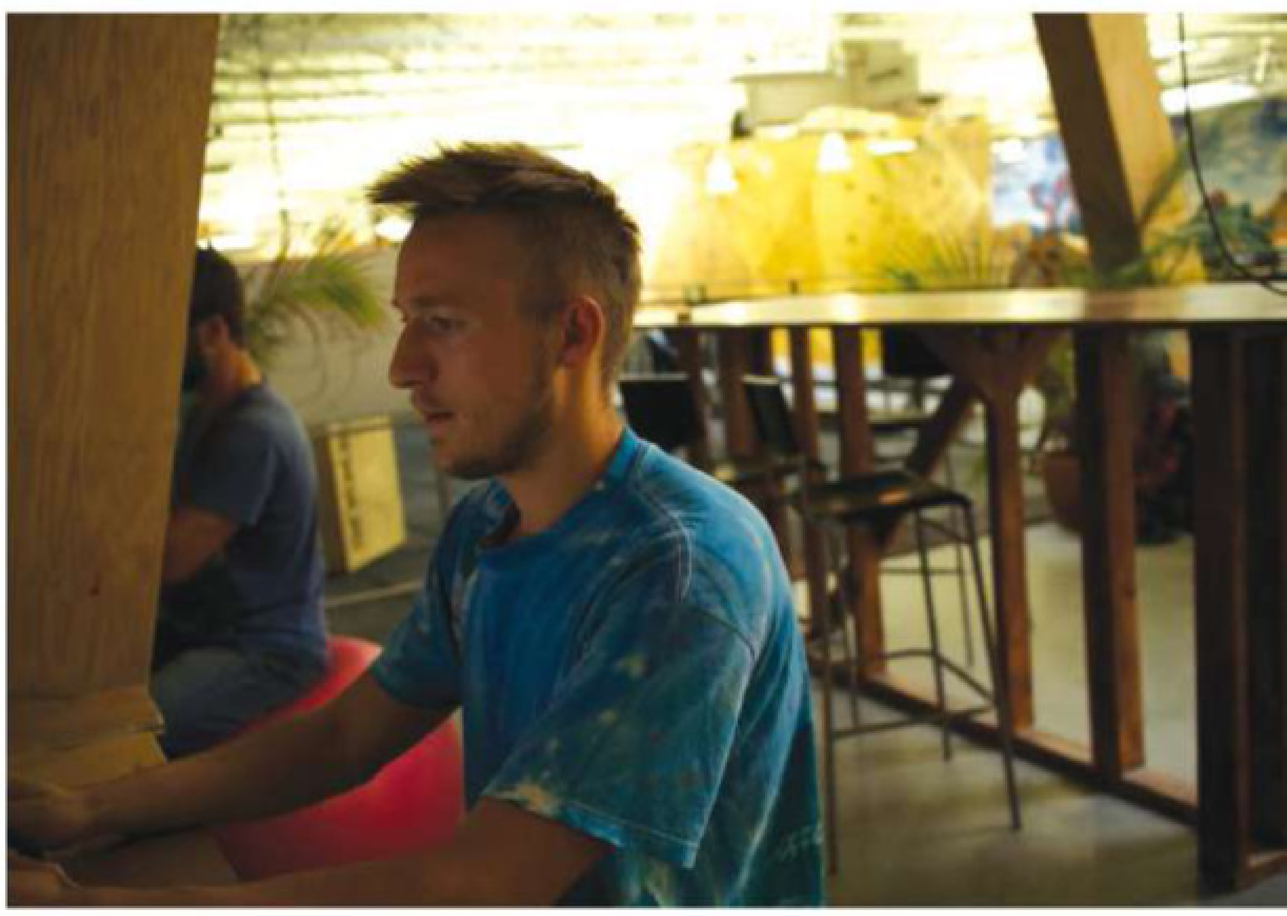
@adambenjamin



OFF THE WALL

An Office With a Plastic View

BY JON CHRISTIAN



Brooklyn Boulders' Somerville, Massachusetts location has all the regular amenities of a climbing gym: 20,000 square feet of climbing surface, cardio and lifting equipment, a yoga room, and Mario Kart on a flat-screen TV. More unusual is the facility's coworking space, which is complete with Wi-Fi and standing desks—and located at the top of a 22-foot climbing wall.

The Active Collaborative Workspace, in which desks, tables, balance balls, and pull-up bars are nestled beneath angular wooden arches and lit in part by light bulbs inside mason jars, represents an unusual union of the sensibilities of fitness and office work, where entrepreneurs, freelancers and students hold meetings and shuffle papers—and take periodic breaks to boulder, try a new route, or take on shorter aerobic activities.

"We often intersperse pushups and handstands with work," said Kyle Kornack, whose organic juice startup Jubali pays for their Brooklyn Boulders membership in shipments of juice.

The workspace was conceptualized by Jesse Levin (official title at Brooklyn Boulders: Senior Cultural Chameleon), who sees a deep connection between creativity and physical activity. The collaborative workspace, which wasn't present in the company's original Brooklyn, New York location, launched at the same time as the Somerville facility. The big picture, Levin says, is to blur conventional lines between work and play.

"We're really trying to deconstruct this traditional paradigm of go to work, go home, have dinner," he said. "You can come to work, get a great workout, get a coffee, jam on your project."

To refine the concept, Levin—whose frenetic résumé spans disaster relief in Haiti, a stint as a rescue-boat captain, and a startup that connects veterans of special forces with jobs in high-tech industries—hosted informal dinners with the types of creative workers he wanted to attract to the Active Collaborative Workspace. Those meetings, he said, informed the design of the space and helped build the community that came to frequent it.

"Climbing is an inherently creative sport," Levin said. "It attracts an incredibly diverse demographic. You have coders, entrepreneurs, yogis."

The coworking space feels unobtrusive at the 40,000-square foot, warehouse-like gym, where employees frequently skateboard between tasks under a giant mural of Spider-Man facing off with Venom. Positioned up a flight of stairs, past a practice climbing wall and treadmills, around two corners and up yet more stairs, it has the feeling of a crow's nest, with an airy view of the cavernous gym.

"I like the idea of a space that has many functions," said Rachel Rosenbluth, a rabbinical student at Hebrew College in Newton, Massachusetts, who recently started coming to the workspace to study. "Instead of sitting in a library for six hours, I can take breaks to exercise and get my heart pumping."

Music from the gym's sound system rises up and mingles with the background sounds of conversation and physical exertion, but nobody in the coworking space expresses irritation at the hubbub.

"I find the silence of libraries to be too much," Rosenbluth said. "I prefer the buzz."

ALEX AROYAN

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PHOTO BY: DEAN FLEMING

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UNBELAYVABLE!

Scary (and true) tales from a crag near you

I saw a man and his two sons toproping a cliff. The guy was standing on top with a rope pulled around a tree, and one of his sons tied in below climbing. There was no harness, no belay device, and no anchor. The tree was just providing friction. He yelled to his kids, "Don't get hurt or your mom will never let us do this again!"

—Jordan, via Climbing.com

LESSON: Mom shouldn't have let them do this in the first place. We've covered anchor- and device-less climbing in this column recently (hint: it's *really* bad), so, this time we'll focus on the tree. This tree is adding nothing to the system, but trees can make great anchors if they're at least six inches in diameter, firmly rooted, and alive. It doesn't hurt to give it a shove and make sure it's solid. Use static rope, webbing, or cordelette for your anchor material, and build it low to the ground to reduce leverage. Never run your climbing rope directly around the tree like Dad did here. Rope will tear up tree bark and vice versa, and sap is just about impossible to clean off a line.

I watched a group of beginners rappel off a route, leave their rope hanging, and return to camp. A few hours later, they sent their kids to retrieve the rope. Unable to coil it, the youngsters each grabbed an armful and dragged the rest back with them.

—Anonymous, via email

LESSON: A clean rope is a strong rope. Dirt particles are very sharp on a microscopic level. When dirt gets on your rope, it will work into the core and cut fibers as the rope stretches and moves. Tests have shown that a dirty rope loses up to 40 percent of its strength. Beyond that, a dirty rope will reduce the lifespan of any gear it comes into contact with. A clean rope will wear a groove into a carabiner over time, but a dirty rope will expedite the process—and put the same wear on belay devices, anchor rings, and anything else it touches. Always keep a tarp between your rope and the ground, and take care not to step on your cord.

I was scouting a ledge to set up a toprope. I wasn't anchored because the terrain was easy, but the ledge was narrow and exposed. A party joined me and started a route directly above me. The leader put in his first piece, a nut, and promptly fell on it. I was directly in his fall line. That nut was the only pro in the rock, and the belayer was unanchored. Lucky for the three of us, the nut held.

—Francesco, via Climbing.com

LESSON: Always build an anchor when belaying from a ledge or any exposed position. What many fail to realize is that the belayer is in danger here, too. If the nut in the above scenario did not hold, the climber would likely fall over the ledge, and then pull his belayer off with him. You're not holding a plummeting climber with strength alone. Build an anchor, and clip the belayer in direct. An anchor will also prevent other mishaps, like the belayer slipping off the ledge and pulling his climber off the wall. Also, don't start climbing directly above another person, whether they're on the ground or actively climbing on the wall.

See something unbelayvable? Email *unbelayvable@climbing.com*.

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AAC member Merrick Ales

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THE NORTH FACE

Photo by: Dylan Huey Photography

USA CLIMBING

american bouldering series

16

ABS 16 Open National Championships: February 6-7, 2015
ABS 16 Youth National Championships: February 13-15, 2015

ABS 16 Divisional Championships: January 10-11, 2015

BaseCamp- Reno, NV · The Front- Ogden, UT · Inner Peaks- Charlotte, NC · Summit Climbing Gym- Dallas, TX · Central Rock- Glastonbury, CT

ABS 16 Regional Championships: December 6, 2014

Seattle Bouldering Project - Seattle, WA · Asana Climbing Gym - Garden City, ID · Dogpatch Boulders - San Francisco,CA · The Factory - Orange, CA
The BLOC climbing + fitness - Tucson, AZ · ABC Kids Climbing - Boulder, CO · Vertical Endeavors - Glendale Heights, IL · Vertical Adventures - Columbus, OH
Triangle Rock Club - Raleigh, NC · Canyons Rock Climbing - Frisco, TX · Stone Moves - Houston, TX · High Point Climbing & Fitness - Chattanooga, TN
SportRock - Sterling, VA · The Gravity Vault - Upper Saddle River, NJ · MetroRock - Newburyport, MA

Registration for the ABS 16 Youth Regional Championships opens on November 1, 2014, register at www.usaclimbing.org
Regional registration closes on November 25, 2014 at 11:59pm MT.

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CONNECT WITH US:

Eric Sanchez displays solid flagging technique on *Judge Dredd* (5.13b), Sea Crag, California. Turn to page 32 for some expert advice from 5.14d climber Ben Spannuth on how to make the most of this tricky technique, and then carry your newfound skills to the thousands of sport and trad routes surrounding the characteristically Southwest town of Tucson, Arizona. Fuel up for your sendfest with gluten-free, ridiculously delicious, and nutritionist-approved chocolate chip cookies (p. 36), and get solid suggestions from badass big waller, boulderer, and rope gun Ben Rueck on how to take your climbing to the next level by pushing past your personal comfort zone.

26 GUIDE // 39 GEAR // 45 CLINICS // 51 VOICES

THE C

LIMB

ALTON RICHARDSON

On the beautifully streaked Taipan Wall in the Grampians of Australia, Ben Rueck forgets his comfort zone on *Groovy*, Australian grade 28, YDS grade 5.12d. Inset: Rueck puts a modern spin on the infamous Patagonia poster featuring John "Verm" Sherman nonchalantly chugging beer during a flip-flop free solo of *Lord of the Rings* (31/5.13d), Grampians.



BY BEN RUECK

The Dreaded Comfort Zone

Experience a breakthrough by getting out of yours

WE ALL HAVE A COMFORT ZONE, this warm, fuzzy little place in our minds we retreat to whenever we are challenged or afraid. For the first half of my climbing career, my comfort zone was bouldering. Growing up in Grand Junction, Colorado, I had access to some of the best boulders in the world. As I matured as a climber, though, something felt lacking in topping out problem after problem. I became stagnant and arrogant, justifying shortcomings by labeling anything that challenged me as lame or not "pure climbing." I was an idiot.

That all changed when I met my two closest friends and training partners, Rob Pizem (aka Piz) and Mayan Smith-Gobat. Both are prolific roped climbers that tend to focus on big walls and traditional climbing, so my options became limited if I wanted to get outside with them. Piz and Mayan would drag me up walls, teaching me the finer points of "pitching out" and placing gear—all the while my nerves were on fire as my stomach clenched with fear. More often than I like to admit, I thought I was going to die—my comfort zone was trying to protect me from the unknown as well as perceived failure.

Those two quickly shattered my zone. We usually had goals of completing routes in a day, making the option for retreat unavailable. The first big wall I climbed was with Mayan on the Diamond in Rocky Mountain National Park—*Hearts and Arrows* (5.12b). I was proficient on 5.12, but it was completely out of my league. I sat petrified on small-cam anchors as the wind and ice-cold water ripped at my jacket. I stared at the ground just waiting for the gear to fail and send me plummeting to my death. I wasn't able to lead a single pitch; Mayan had to drag me on toprope to the summit. However, there was a small sense of accomplishment and a spark of curiosity.

My second wall was with Piz in the Black Canyon outside of Gunnison, Colorado. I led quite a few of the pitches—terrified but still on the sharp end. It was slow progress, but progress all the same. As I gained more experience on multi-pitch, single pitch, and walls, I pushed the boundaries of my comfort zone. I discovered that my fear was more manageable. I gained strength and confidence as I ventured farther above bolts or cam placements. Mental pieces that I was not aware of surfaced, and soon climbing became a game. The questions "What am I capable of?" and "How does this sequence go?" became my mantra, and with it, I achieved my goals.

But a comfort zone is a funny thing. Like your climbing ability itself, it's dynamic. Climbing *The Place of Happiness* (5.12d, 18 pitches) in Brazil brought to light that if you are truly challenging yourself, you will always be outside your comfort zone. *Place of Happiness* crushed me on the first attempt. Unable to manage my fear due to 30- to 60-foot distances between bolts on small, friable granite holds, I felt paralyzed. My mental game fell apart, and I was back to being that scared little boy on the Diamond. However, even though I was frightened, I managed to pull it together for the second attempt and climbed my pitches until Mayan and I were weathered out 180 feet from the top and had to bail. Pushing myself in these situations created exponential growth in both my personal and climbing life. When your comfort zone is expanded and challenged, you become more curious, more adventurous, more dynamic—a better climber.

How to Expand Your Comfort Zone

1 ASK BETTER QUESTIONS

This was tough for me to learn, but when met with failure, many climbers ask "Why can't I climb this?" I am guilty of it, but as I developed, I learned that it is not a *why can't I*, but a *how can I*. With this subtle shift, there become definable terms that can be improved upon in sequences and steps—which inevitably will lead to some level of success.

2 ELIMINATE "FAILURE"

Climbers are too often focused on the negatives—shortcomings in strength, power, endurance, etc. When we fail on a climb, we chastise ourselves. Here's a secret: No one cares! So neither should you! If you learn from mistakes and maintain a positive attitude, there is no failure. Not achieving a goal isn't failing. It's just a baseline for trying again.

3 THINK LESS, DO MORE

Most fears that keep us from learning or trying are centered in our imagination. We think more than we act. Calculating risk and reward is a good trait as long as a balance is found by putting those calculations to use. Make a move or nothing ever gets done. Even if all that gets done is moving on from a project or bailing on a route, you've done something.

4 EMBRACE COMMUNITY

No man is an island. Climbing is social; we develop relationships with friends and partners that help us grow. A community can help create a connection and reach breakthroughs. Support and encouragement can help expand comfort zones into trying new things (even if you don't achieve your goal that particular time).

5 HOW BAD DO YOU WANT IT?

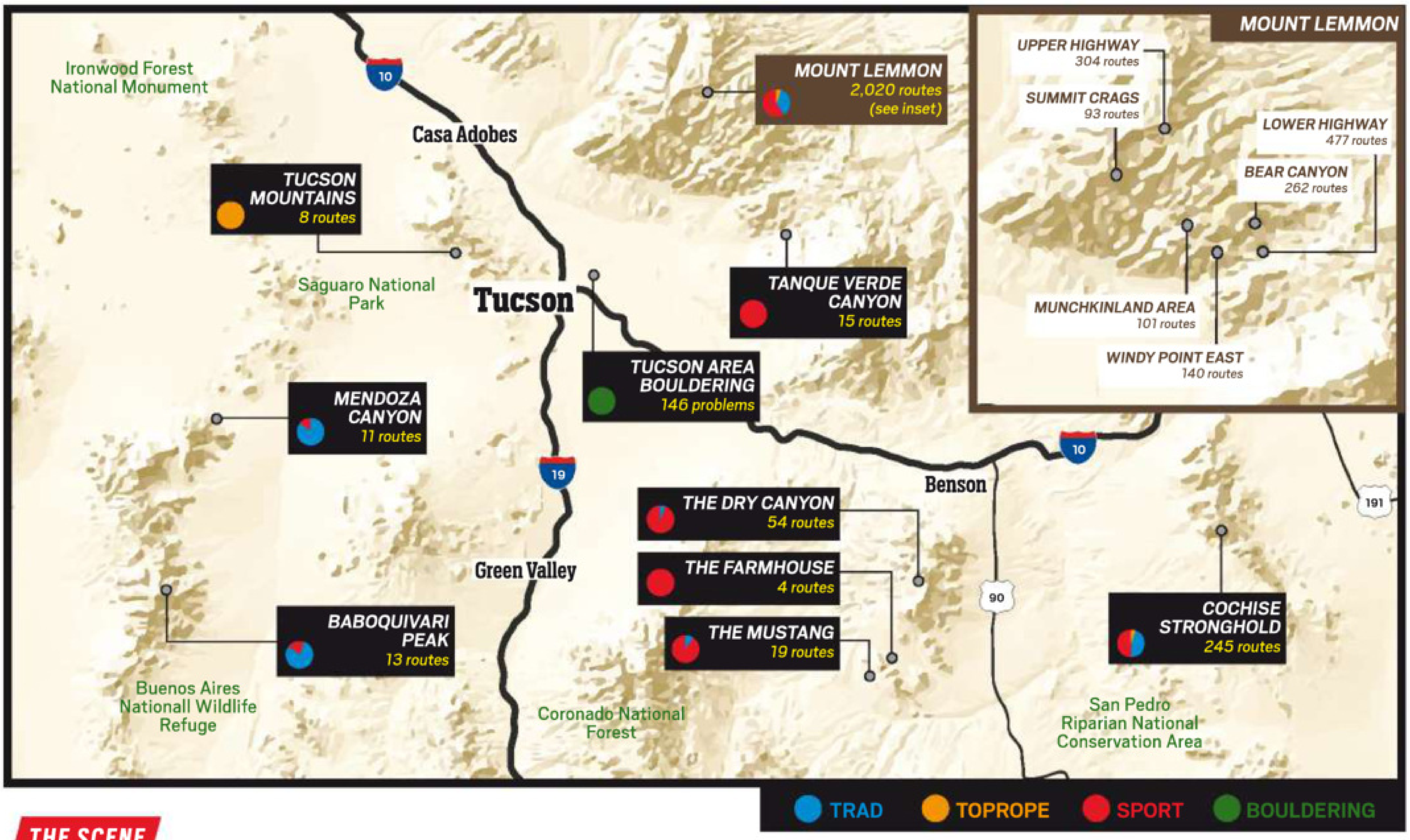
When I first started training with Piz, we would start at 4:30 a.m. After eight weeks of this, I felt a drop in motivation. When the alarm sounded, I'd debate between sleep and train. Each time I asked myself, "How bad do I want it?" Every time I'd get up and go meet Piz. Those words have pushed me completely out of my comfort zone.

ANDREW BURR (2)

Epicenter: Tucson, AZ

Discover one of America's best winter climbing destinations

BY J.P. WHITEHEAD



THE SCENE

Desert Delight

Southern Arizona is a mysterious place, where cacti outnumber climbers and tumbleweeds really do roll across empty stretches of highway. It may not be mentioned in the same breath as Moab, Bishop, Boulder, or North Conway, but it should be—and you'd be hard-pressed to find better climbing conditions in the dead of North America's winter than around Tucson. Average highs in February are in the low 70s. The golden granite domes of Cochise Stronghold, once the hiding place of Apache chiefs and now the home of runout testpiece trad routes, are just 90 minutes away. The domes and bulbous walls of Cochise might humble even the strongest climbers when they find themselves shaking on a "solid" 5.9. Over the past two decades, the local climbing community has developed hundreds of sport and trad lines up the many granite edifices on the expansive Mount Lemmon, an area with more than 500 5.10s and everything from power-tech crimp lines on the Beaver Wall, to pure enduro hauls up at the Orifice. You can find steep limestone sport routes at the recently developed Dry Canyon and hundreds of boulder problems scattered around the town. With a quirky bar scene, killer Mexican food, and a near-guarantee of empty, quality cragging, what's not to love about this desert town?



Do this route on bolts and call it *Golden Beaver Left*, or do it on gear, like Peter Vintoniv demonstrates, and call it *Brazilian Beaver*—either way, it's still 5.13-.

ANDREW BURR

POWERED BY MOUNTAIN PROJECT

Remember When Tents Didn't Have Lights...

Dancing in the moonlight in Indian Basin,
Wind River Range, WY – Braden Gunem

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LOCALS KNOW

Where climbers:

[eat]

Any climber worth their salt knows that a post-sesh burrito is truly therapeutic, and this area has some of the best in the nation. **Nico's Mexican Food** (520-790-5550) is a local chain and favorite for the midday taco. Slightly upscale, **La Cocina** (*lacocinatucson.com*, 520-622-0351) is a hip Mexican joint where you're sure to run into fellow climbers. For a unique Tucson experience, try the Sonoran hot dog—it may well be the pinnacle of hot-dog endeavors. The bacon-wrapped tubesteak is smothered in a colorful array of condiments including pinto beans, avocado, pico de gallo, cheese, and jalapeño sauce, then held together in a doughy, extra-large bun. This is one seriously delicious dog, and may be a rest-day activity in itself. **El Guero Canelo** is the spot for this mighty hot dog, so pay a visit while you're in town (*elguerocanelo.com*).

[drink]

Get a "Man-mosa" (Miller High Life and orange juice) at **Che's Lounge** (*ches-lounge.com*, 520-623-2088) for just one buck. Also notable, **The District Tavern** (520-791-0082) boasts the best jukebox in town in a dive-y atmosphere of cheap drinks and billiards. It's cash only, and the ATM is regularly out of order. Warning: $3 gets you a beer and a shot of whiskey, which can quickly turn tomorrow into an unintended rest day. Craft beer your thing? **Tap and Bottle's** Dragoon IPA is what one local climber says "is the only thing that makes anything worthwhile" (*thetapandbottle.com*, 520-344-8999).

[gear up]

Summit Hut (*summithut.com*) has been a Tucson institution for more than 40 years. Starting in the bedrooms of its founders in 1967 (with the gear inventory stashed under their beds), Summit Hut now thrives with two locations in the area. Stop by the shop for deals on chalkbags, gear, ropes, and climbing shoes. The store also has a bookshelf with extensive literature and guidebooks on Southwest crags. As is expected at local shops, the staff is knowledgeable and can help you out with camping or climbing beta for Lemmon or Cochise.

[kill time]

As a rule, any desert down time should be spent seeking water, for hydration, sure, but especially for swimming! Find killer swimming holes and cliff jumping at **Lemmon Pools** (via an easy eight-mile round-trip hike) or **Tanque Verde Falls** (a 1.6-mile out-and-back), both within an hour's drive of Tucson proper. Or grab your headlamp and venture into **Peppersauce Cave** at the base of Mount Lemmon. This formation has over a mile of mapped underground trails.

[sleep]

There is free camping all over the **Santa Catalina Natural Area**—the home of Mount Lemmon. Mt. Bigelow Road, which takes you to the summit of Lemmon, has scattered primitive campsites throughout, though these are closed from December until March. There are plentiful year-round sites on **Incinerator Ridge Road**, off of Mt. Lemmon Highway. All of these sites are on BLM land, but fire permits are required at some, so do your research, or pack a stove. If Cochise is your objective, there are free sites at both **East** and **West Stronghold**. At the latter, **Isle of Ewe** offers gorgeous, free camping just outside of Sheepshead and Westworld Dome. In **East Stronghold**, the parking area at the end of Ironwood Road has pay-station sites with bathrooms (520-364-3468). None of these sites, established or off the grid, offer running water, so invest in a five-gallon jug and fill up in town, which is especially important in the warmer months.

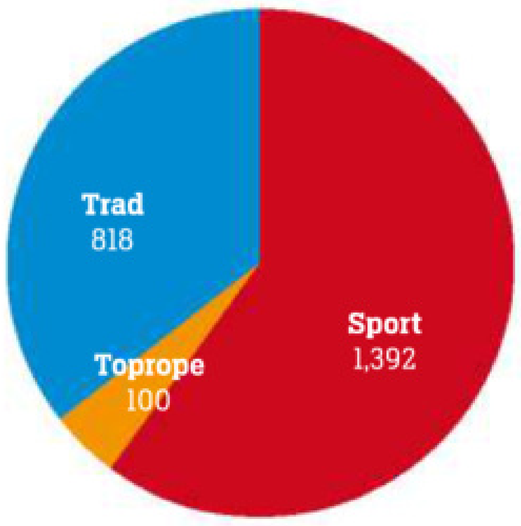


Peter Vintoniv finds one of the spectacular edges that are common to Mount Lemmon.

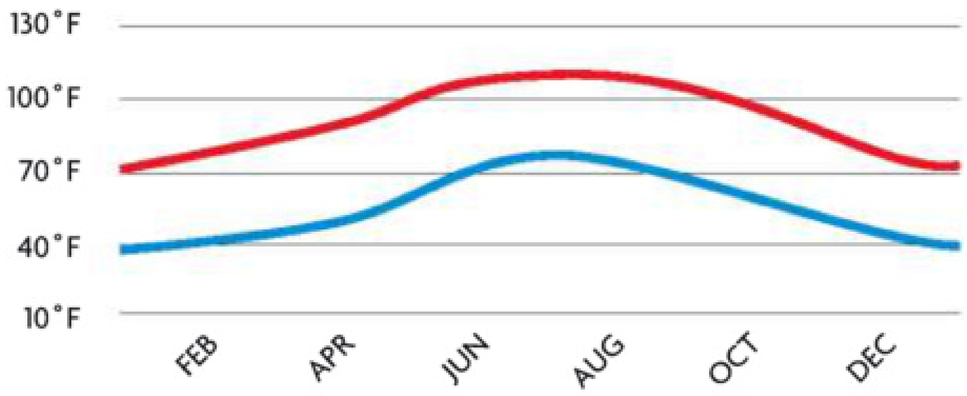
ANDREW BURR

METRICS

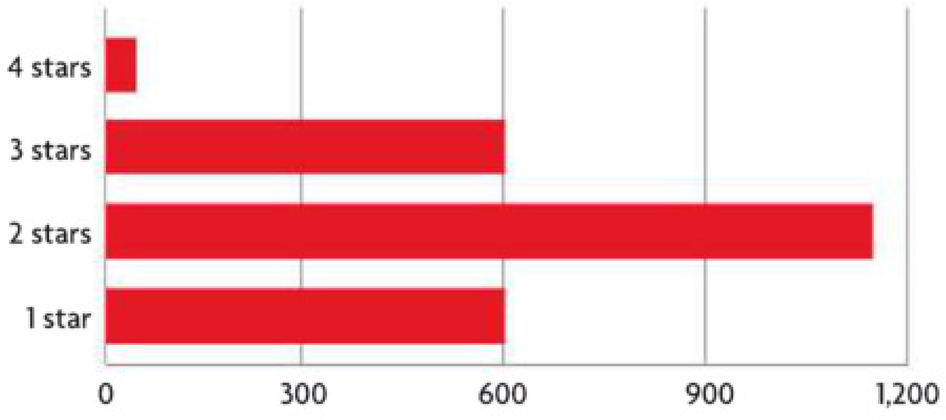
Style
Playground for sport; proving ground for trad



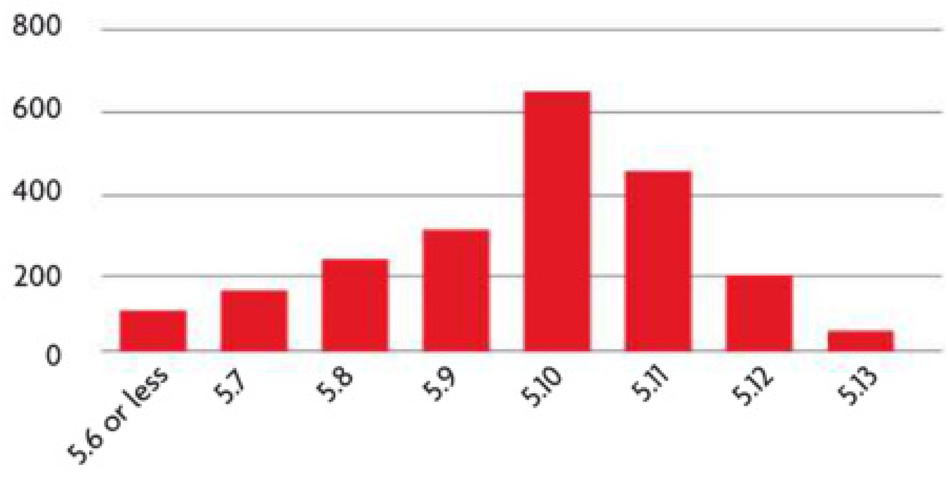
Weather
Warm winter wonderland



Quality
Quantity is a quality in itself



Difficulty
A moderate climber's heaven



ROUTES

Tucson Classics

The 10 best 4-star routes as ranked by Mountain Project users

The Wasteland (5.8)
East Cochise Stronghold
"An excellent maze of zigzagging cracks, chimneys, and chickenheads, not to mention a heady traverse, and excellent exposure. No doubt one of the best climbs in Arizona. No place for a sport climber!"

Old Man (5.9)
Windy Point West, Mount Lemmon
"The exposure after you pull the roof will put a smile on any climber's face. The views of Hawk's Bill Spire from the belay are great."

Absinthe of Mallet (5.9+)
The Sheepshead,
West Cochise Stronghold
"Wow, this is a stellar climb! The cruxes were terrific and well-protected, though the sixth pitch will feel runout to folks not comfortable with slab dancing."

Warpaint (5.10c)
Westworld Dome,
West Cochise Stronghold
"Awesome route. I fell and fell on the friction-slab first pitch. Once I finally made it, the rest of the route was a cruise, except for the wind up high. I hugged the arête for a long time waiting for it to die down. Exciting!"

Lizard Marmalade Direct (5.10+)
Windy Point East, Mount Lemmon
"One of the best routes in Southern Arizona. A few exciting thin moves in the middle to a steep, juggy, interesting finish. Engaging to the last move. A little spicy in the middle but good placements."

Abracadaver (5.11a)
Rockfellow Dome,
East Cochise Stronghold
"What a day! Rugged approach, excellent and varied climbing, solid rock, great position, and beautiful views. Feed yourself into the offwidth on the second pitch and expect no mercy!"

The Planet Eater (5.11)
Middle Earth, Mount Lemmon
"I was in the middle of a cruxy, kind-of-runout section up high when the bullets started landing. My belayer said 'Jesus, someone's shooting at us!' My brain did a quick calculation of the chances of someone hitting me from across the canyon and came up with: Don't sweat it, keep climbing. Save for the bullets, a really good climb that punches you in the face if you think it's over before the chains."

Sound of One Hand Thrashing (5.11c/d)
Rockfellow Dome,
East Cochise Stronghold
"This route deserves way more attention than it gets. Save for the low-angle offwidth on pitch four, there is challenging climbing on good rock bottom to top. I have never climbed or even seen anything like the semi-circular groove on pitch two."

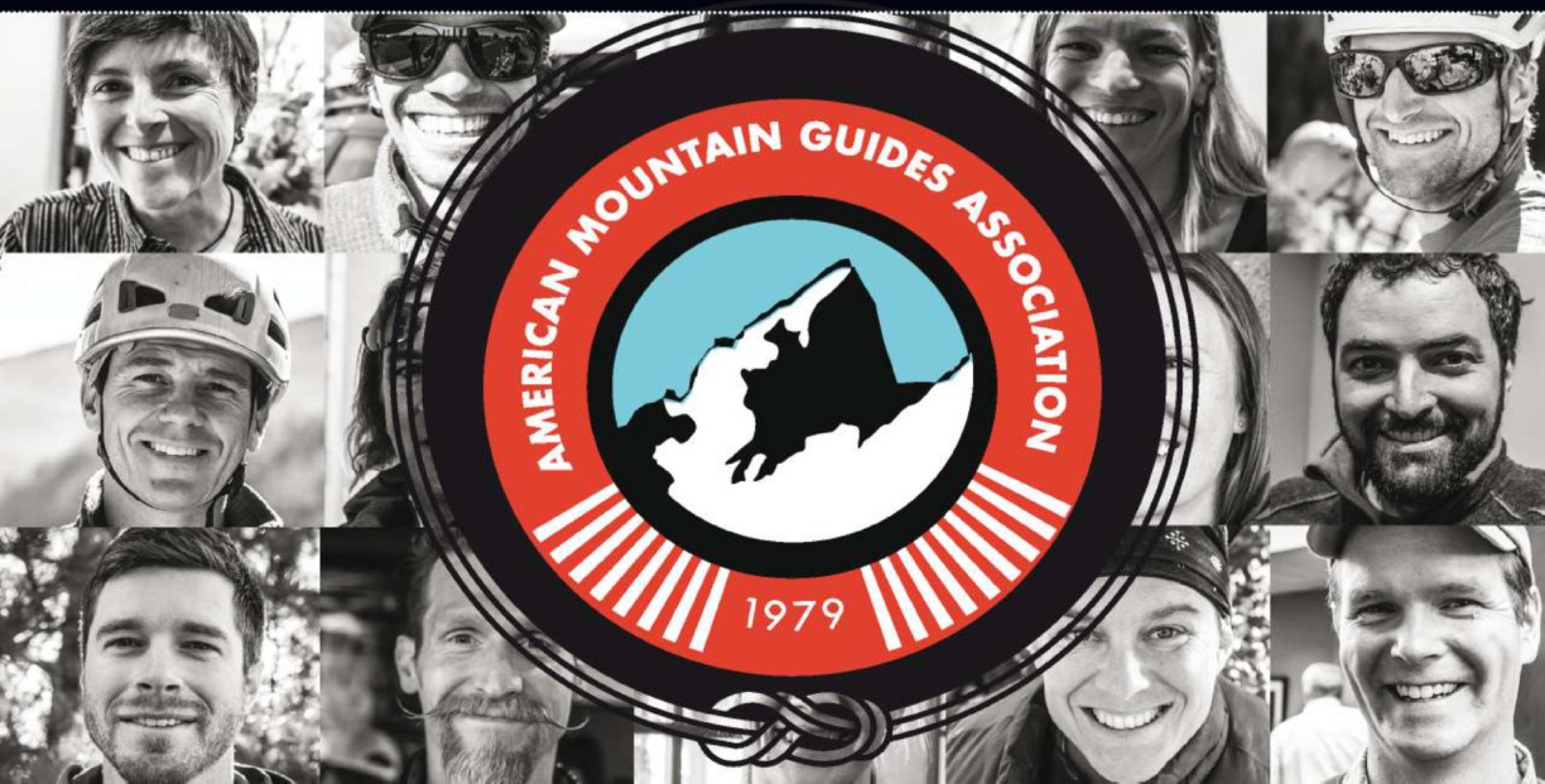
Tsunami (5.12)
New Wave Wall, Mount Lemmon
"This is one of the best sport climbs you'll find on Lemmon and perhaps all of Arizona. I also believe this is a good gauge for all of the other 12s on Lemmon. Anyone who climbs *Tsunami* will not be disappointed."

Hard Day at the Orifice (5.12b)
The Fortress, Mount Lemmon
"I'd give this six stars if I could. For a challenging thrill and a reward after you redpoint, clean the route then climb up on TR to the second bolt or higher and take the swing out over the canyon below. Mandatory at least once."

POWERED BY MOUNTAIN PROJECT

Stats are for the immediate Tucson area. Get route beta, photos, and topos for the whole state at* ***mountainproject.com/arizona**.*

FIND A GUIDE » AMGA.COM « BECOME ONE



BY JULIE ELLISON

Let Your Flag Fly

Improve balance and technique with this flagging primer

WOULDN'T IT BE NICE if the crux on your project had a huge, sticky, perfectly formed foothold in just the right place? But then no climb would be harder than 5.8, and what's the fun in that? As you venture into the world of intermediate and advanced routes, you'll find yourself forced into some awkward body positions, whether it's because there is no hold to be found or because the movement is actually easier when you leave one foot off. A technique called flagging allows you to use that free-hanging foot as a counterbalance to make the next move, gain more reach, or prevent a barndoor swing. This move can be used on all angles and types of routes (except slabs, generally), and you'll find flagging makes you a smoother climber when it becomes a go-to move in your quiver of skills. Below we'll outline how to maximize this technique, including some authoritative tips from 5.14d climber Ben Spannuth.

BASICS

Flagging is specific to the location and quality of the holds, body position, and the direction of movement. Although these details will determine exactly how you flag, there's one general guideline: Picture a vertical line that runs through the center of your body, and the goal is to keep your weight balanced on both sides of that line. Having a right handhold and left foothold creates this balance, but imagine having a right hand and a right foot; once you begin to move upward, your left foot is going to swing out (aka barndoor), pulling you off. Flag that left foot behind your right (a rear flag) to move the weight to the right, more in line with your supporting foot and hand, keeping your body from swinging out by shifting your center of gravity. Flagging utilizes pure body positioning (instead of power, strength, or endurance) to statically make the next move, which improves your overall technique, reduces dynamic movement, and uses less energy on the wall. This means less throwing and stabbing at holds and more time simply stepping up and latching them. With both rear and side flags, keep your flagging leg as straight and engaged as possible—a loosely hanging limb can easily pull you out of position.



REAR FLAG

Common on overhanging terrain, the rear flag puts the free leg behind and almost perpendicular to the standing leg. It's used when you have holds on only one side of your body and you need to move the opposite direction. Let's say your left hand and left foot are on and you need to move right, a rear flag with the right foot behind and to the left will shift your center of gravity farther left, thus more in line with your supporting hand and foot. This body position is more stable, and it becomes easier to funnel upward power from your left foot into your hips (because they're closer to, instead of extended away from, your power-providing foot and leg), giving you a larger range of motion to latch a handhold when moving right.

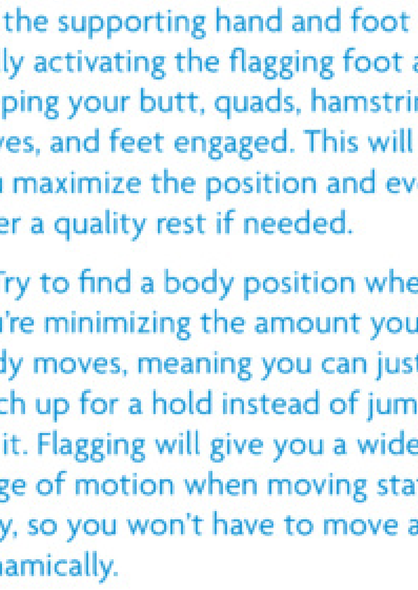


SIDE FLAG

With your free leg out to its respective side (e.g., left leg will be out to the left), press against the wall with the instep of that foot. Instead of using an individual hold for the flagging foot, think of the whole wall as something to push against. The harder you press, the more leverage you will get to move upward, so keep that leg straight and really push with the foot. A common scenario for the side flag is left hand and right foot on two holds that are aligned somewhat vertically, right hip turned into the wall, and left foot flagging to the left side. Your supporting right foot will drive you up and right while the left leg maintains balance on the left side. If moving left, stand up on the right foot and twist your right hip into the wall; the flagging foot will keep your body from swinging out.

CAPTURE THE FLAG

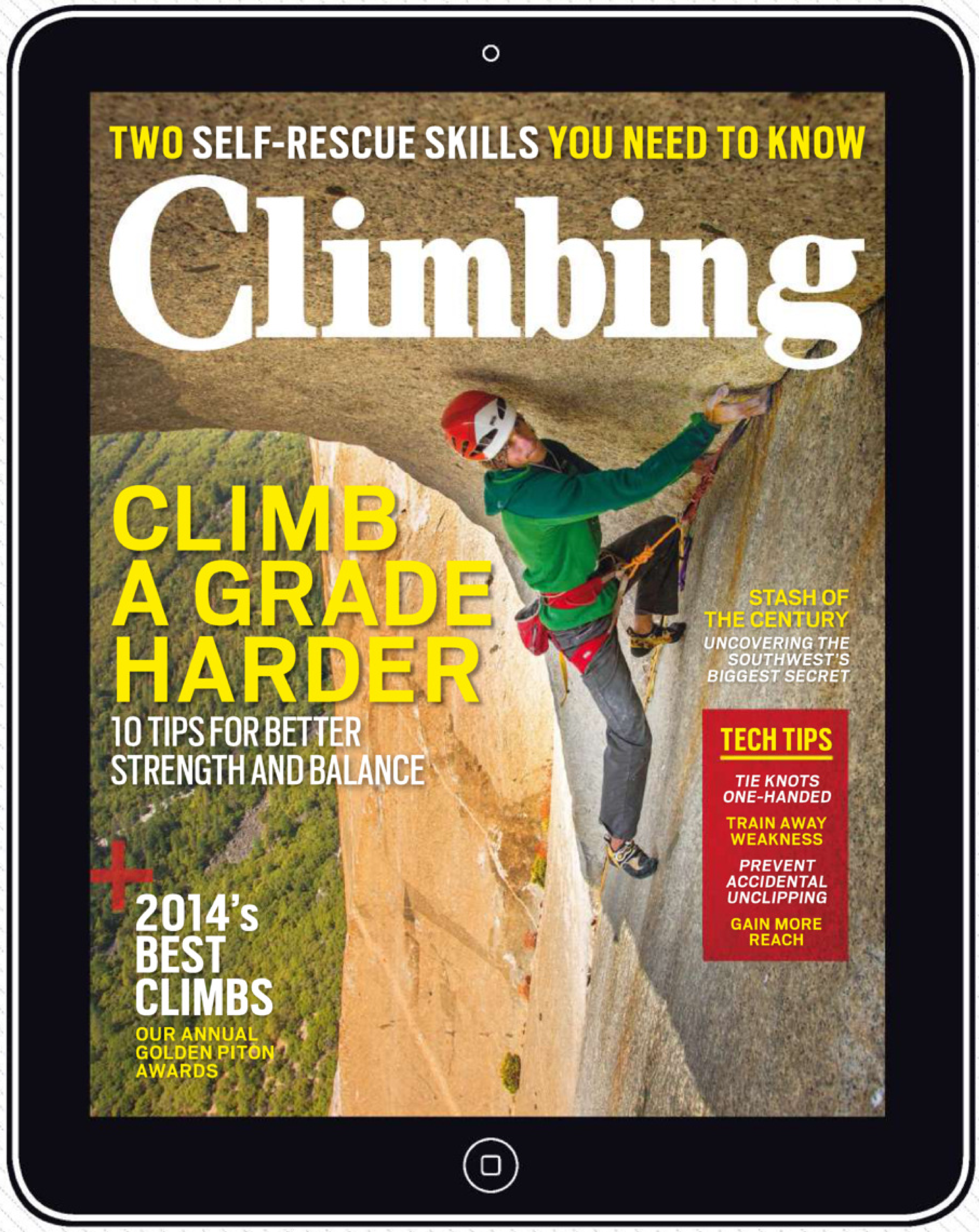
with Ben Spannuth



- In general, you will flag when you have good holds for only one side of the body, particularly when back-stepping isn't as efficient because the foothold is too high or too far from the back-stepping foot.
- Flagging is useful for all angles of climbing terrain, and it can feel super-balancey on more vertical angles, so it's important to keep your whole body flexed and tight.
- On steeper climbs, think about sinking deep into the flag by hanging low off the supporting hand and foot while really activating the flagging foot and keeping your butt, quads, hamstrings, calves, and feet engaged. This will help you maximize the position and even offer a quality rest if needed.
- Try to find a body position where you're minimizing the amount your body moves, meaning you can just reach up for a hold instead of jumping for it. Flagging will give you a wider range of motion when moving statically, so you won't have to move as dynamically.
- Settle into the position that's going to be the most efficient, meaning your legs will hold most of the weight but you can still reach the next hold.
- You can always shift more weight to your feet than you think. Part of this is trusting the one foot that's on fully, which will cause you to put more weight on the hold and allow you to sink deeper into the flagging position.
- Although rear flagging can put you in a seemingly strange body position, don't be afraid to fall awkwardly (more confidence equals a better flag!). Your limbs will naturally and safely untangle themselves if you do fall.
- Once you practice this a few times, you'll start to flag without even realizing it. Side and rear flags will become your body's natural reaction when trying to keep you balanced.

BLAKE MCCORD (LEFT); ALTON RICHARDSON; SKIP STERLING (TOP RIGHT)

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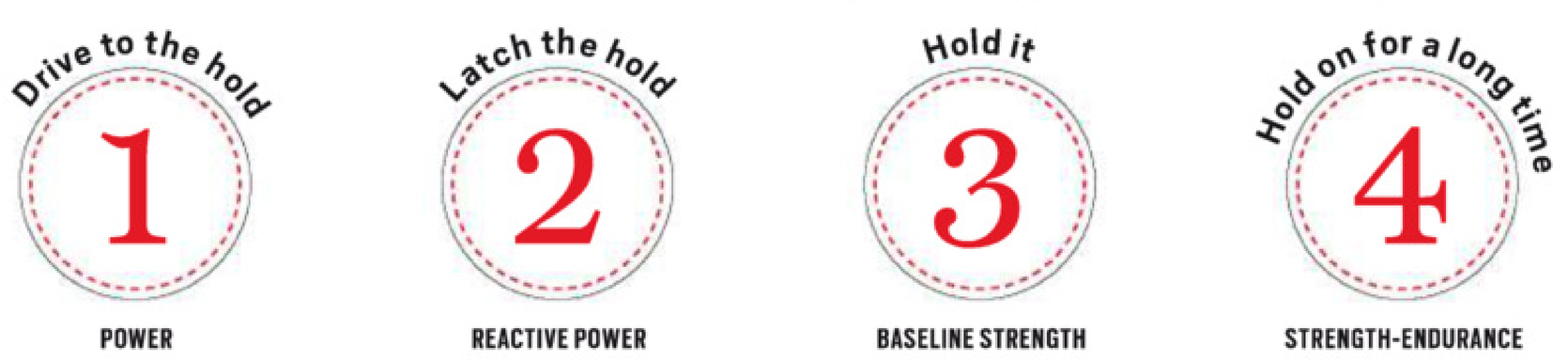
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Workout Workshop

BY J.P. WHITEHEAD

Design a customized training program to overcome personal weaknesses

THE OLD MANTRA, "The best way to train for climbing is climbing," doesn't really hold up any more. Sport-specific training is the key to improvement because it mimics the movements of climbing in an isolated and intensive fashion that climbing itself does not. Even for a committed gym rat, all the books, blogs, online programs, and random tidbits out there can be confusing, if not intimidating. So, we've created an à la carte training menu breaking down different types of strength, how each type affects your climbing, and targeted workouts to train each type. This way, you have all the necessary tools to craft a personalized workout specific to your weaknesses and goals as a climber. We've also provided a three-week sample of workouts—one for a boulderer and one for a sport climber, just in case. As winter rages on, this will get you in tip-top shape for when spring sending season finally comes.



IF YOU WANT TO TRAIN FOR...

→Short, strenuous boulder problems, do
DEAD HANGS:
On a hangboard, pick a grip and hang for 10 seconds, rest 50 seconds. Repeat 5 to 10 times. It should be strenuous but doable.
WHY: Baseline strength. A long, difficult hang places maximal strain on your forearm muscles, while the prolonged rests between each rep allows ample recovery time. This mimics executing a difficult move when fresh.
CUSTOMIZATION: If prone to tendon injuries, stick to more comfortable edges, but try adding weight (5 lbs.). Use your weakest hold type. If you can't hang the full 10 seconds during the last few, that's OK. If you fail before 5 reps, choose an easier grip. A session should include a set or 2 of 5 to 10 reps on each hold, with 5 minutes of rest between sets.

→Several consecutive hard moves, do
REPEATERS:
Pick a moderately difficult grip and hang for 7 seconds, then rest for 3 seconds. Repeat 7 times.
WHY: Strength-endurance, baseline strength. By lessening the strain of each hang and shortening the rest, these work your forearms under increasing fatigue, which mimics several moves of maximum output without recovery opportunities.
CUSTOMIZATION: Use harder or easier holds based on your ability level; advanced climbers may try adding weight. Tailor it to match your climbing goals. If you're going to Wild Iris for a week, do repeaters on pockets. Horse Pens? Use slopers. In one session, perform one set of repeaters on three or four different grip types with long rests (5 minutes) between sets.

→Big, dynamic moves or a bouldery crux high on a route, do
CAMPUS LADDERS:
Ascend the rungs hand over hand like a ladder. Avoid matching hands. Try to reach the top quickly while staying in control, then slowly descend the ladder hand over hand. Do 6 to 12 total movements before stepping off.
WHY: Strength-endurance, power-endurance. This will help shorter climbers who need explosive strength to jump through moves. Campusing requires explosive muscle reaction, and controlled ladders train your muscles to continue pumping out power under fatigue.
CUSTOMIZATION: You should be a solid 5.11/V4 climber to campus. Use footholds under the board if needed, but try to use your upper body. Start skipping rungs to make it harder, or do more moves.

→Beta-intensive cruxes, do
STYLE-SPECIFIC 4x4'S:
Pick four boulder problems: one that works a weakness and is about 85% of your max ability, the other three should be 60 to 70% of your max, preferably focusing on a weakness. Climb all four problems without resting. When you do all four, rest for 3 minutes. Repeat three times.
WHY: Strength-endurance, power-endurance. As a pump develops, most climbers overlook decision-making skills that drive good technique. The first round, focus on technique and remember that sequence as you become fatigued.
CUSTOMIZATION: Pick problems characteristic of an area or project. If it feels easy, try wearing a weight belt. If it feels hard, pick three easier problems and one style-specific hard problem.

→Lockoffs or big moves to bad holds, do
GO-AGAINS:
Start matched at a head-height campus rung. Throw with one hand to a higher rung, then return to start. Repeat. Without stepping off the campus ladder, do it with the opposite hand, and repeat. Step off after two throws with each arm.
WHY: Power, reactive power. This trains your muscles to react quickly. The first throw shows your forearm what it needs to do, and the second throw adds fatigue to the equation, helping develop quick communication between brain and muscle, which directly translates to "contact strength" for big moves.
CUSTOMIZATION: This exercise is for advanced climbers. Longer throws, smaller rungs, and more sets make it harder. Beginners use footholds.

→Onsighting, do
ONE-ARM TRAVERSES:
Traverse a section of wall using only one arm. Each movement should be fluid: Look for your next hold, pull your body in, bump your hand to the hold, and weight it. Try to perform at least 20 movements with each arm in one session.
WHY: Reactive power. This takes away the benefit of having another hand to support you while you "feel out" a hold before weighting it, and it forces your muscles to engage quickly to keep you on the wall. When you encounter a tricky sloper or an awkward edge, adjustments must be made fast. Traversing also works your endurance, improving your reactive power as your muscles fatigue.
CUSTOMIZATION: Choose difficult holds. If one arm is weaker, do more moves with that arm.

DEFINITIONS

Power

Power is your explosive strength, or total muscle output expressed quickly. Power comes into play when initiating dynamic moves and deadpoints; it's the explosive strength that drives you to the hold. Power-endurance is the ability to perform these big moves under fatigue, like doing a bouldery section at the top of a route.

Reactive Power

It's all about response time here—the ability of your muscles to respond and adapt quickly when first grabbing a hold. This is commonly referred to as "contact strength," and it helps you stick dynamic moves when you don't hit a hold quite right or if the hold isn't very good. Your muscles should quickly adapt to a variety of hold types.

Baseline Strength

Your absolute maximum output: the smallest hold or hardest move you can complete when fresh, the pure muscular ability of the forearm. More baseline strength translates across all aspects of climbing—the harder you can pull, the more difficult moves you can do. As you develop a pump, you transition into strength-endurance.

Strength-Endurance

This reflects your muscles' ability to perform when fatigued. Improving it increases blood flow to your muscles, delivering more oxygen and flushing out crippling lactic acid. Unlike power-endurance, which involves explosive movements under fatigue, strength-endurance is a consistent strength even if you're pumped.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Always warm up; easy climbing for 20 to 30 minutes is sufficient. Try to include a day for core exercises or other cross-training. Always take at least one full rest day, two if you're still feeling tired after one. Just remember: You don't get strong training; you get strong resting as your muscles rebuild. Finally, dedicate one day each week to trying hard and having fun! This will help you gauge progress and put your strengths to the test without losing sight of why you're training. A day of climbing outside or inside can keep you entertained and motivated, which is incredibly important to successful training. Keep at it.

CLIMBER: V5 Boulderer
GOAL: Joe's Valley tour of destruction, gymnastic bouldering through large crimps, pockets, and slopers; most problems are slightly overhanging or steeper but short.

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
WEEK 1						
2 sets of dead hangs on each: small crimp, sloper, two-finger pocket; core workout	Rest	2 sets of campus ladders: medium rungs	Style-specific 4x4's: 1 sloper problem and 1 roof problem; 1 set of repeaters	Rest	Work on projects outside, or climb hard in the gym	Cross-train; core workout
WEEK 2						
3 sets of repeaters on each: small crimp, sloper, two-finger pocket	Rest	3 sets of go-agains: small rungs; 1 set of dead hangs; core workout	3 sets of dead hangs on each: small crimp, sloper, two-finger pocket	Rest	Work on projects outside, or climb hard in the gym; core workout	Rest
WEEK 3						
2 sets of campus ladders: medium rungs; 2 sets of go-agains	Cross-train	Style-specific 4x4's; 1 sloper problem and 1 crimpy problem; core workout	3 sets of repeaters on each: small crimp, sloper, two-finger pocket	Rest	Work on projects outside, or climb hard in the gym	Rest

CLIMBER: 5.11b Sport Climber
GOAL: Red River Gorge domination, endure sandstone steepness with tons of crimps, edges, slopers, and pinches. Many cruxes revolve around a boulder problem high on the route.

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
WEEK 1						
One-arm traverse; 3 sets of dead hangs on each: small crimp, medium edge, sloper	Rest	1 set of repeaters; 3 sets of campus ladders: large rungs; core workout	2 sets of style-specific 4x4's: pick long problems	Cross-train	Work on projects outside, or climb hard in the gym; core workout	Rest
WEEK 2						
One-arm traverse; 4 sets of repeaters: medium edge, sloper, pocket	Rest	2 sets of repeaters; 3 sets of go-agains: large rungs, core workout	Style-specific 4x4's: 1 sloper problem, 1 dynamic movement problem	Rest	Work on projects outside, or climb hard in the gym	Cross-train
WEEK 3						
2 sets of style-specific 4x4's; 2 sets of campus ladders: large rungs	Rest	3 sets of dead hangs on each: small crimp, medium edge, sloper	2 sets of style-specific 4x4's: 2 long problems, 1 roof problem; 1 set of repeaters	Rest	Work on projects outside, or climb hard in the gym	Cross-train; core workout



Cookie Monster

Replace boring bars with energy-filled cookies—yes, cookies!

BY SHANNON DAVIS

BREAKING NEWS from the department of "hell yeah": Cookies are a nutritionist-approved way to beat the bonk and maintain stoke for a full day of climbing. Of course, if you stuff 20 in your face while sitting on the couch for an eight-hour Family Guy marathon, your six-pack will eventually turn into a pony keg. But for climbers who need fast calories at the crag or in the alpine, these tasty treats pack a compelling array of advantages: Simple ingredients controlled by you, the baker. No unpronounceable stuff or lab-derived chemicals and flavors. Higher moisture content (43%) makes them easier to digest and more hydrating. (Most energy bars require a moisture content at 10% or below to make them shelf-stable.) This recipe uses rice and potato flours so that they can be eaten by anyone, even gluten-sensitive folks. They are small and eminently portable—put them in your jacket pocket to keep 'em soft for belay noshing. Finally, the most obvious reason: Duh, it's a cookie! It's certainly one of the most universally tasty ways to get the carbs, fat, sugar, and protein you need.

Ingredients



2 tablespoons potato flour



½ cup almond milk, heated

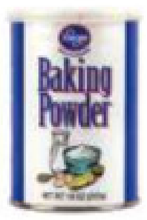


1 cup brown rice flour

1 egg



¼ cup semisweet chocolate chips



¼ teaspoon baking powder



1 tablespoon coconut oil



1 teaspoon unsweetened cocoa powder



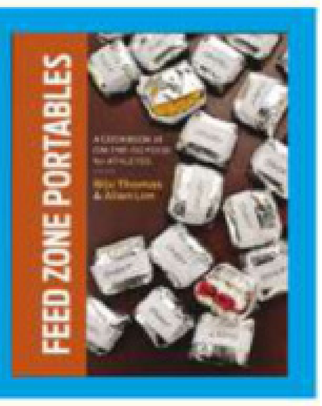
1 tablespoon brown sugar



½ teaspoon vanilla extract

FILL UP!

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Directions

→Heat oven to 350º. Lightly coat a baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray or line with parchment paper. In a large bowl, combine dry ingredients (except chips). Heat the milk for 90 seconds in microwave or until very hot (but not boiling). Add the coconut oil (or butter as a substitute) to the hot milk to melt it. Quickly whisk in the egg and other wet ingredients. Pour the hot mixture into the bowl of dry ingredients. Stir until thoroughly combined. Set aside the dough to cool for a moment while you prepare the topping. Fold in chocolate chips, then shape cookies into 12 golf ball–size chunks. Lightly flatten and top with a generous pinch of sugar and salt (or cinnamon and nuts if you prefer). Bake for 15 minutes.

Nutrition Facts per serving (1 cookie)	
Energy 91 cal	**Carbs** 15g
Fat 3g	**Fiber** 1g
Sodium 116mg	**Protein** 2g

Top with:



1 tablespoon coarse salt



2 tablespoons raw sugar

JULIE ELLISON (11); BEN FULLERTON (2)

When the Chips Are Down

Strapped for time? Here are our three favorite store-bought cookies.



Tate's Bake Shop Chocolate Chip Cookies

$23 (three 7 oz. bags), tatesbakeshop.com

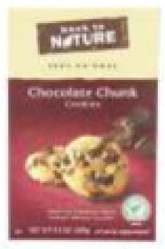
With just 11 ingredients, it's "a crispy cookie that's the closest to home-baked I've ever tried." **Trader Joe's sells the similar Trader Joe's Highbrow Chocolate Chip Cookies.*



Wow Baking Company Chocolate Chip Cookies

$5 (8 oz. bag), wowbaking.com

Gluten-free and packing 960 calorie per resealable bag, "These are surprisingly moist and dollar for dollar one of the best crag-food options I've found."



Back to Nature Chocolate Chunk Cookies

$7 (10 oz. box), backtonaturefoods.com

Oven-baked with nothing but all-natural ingredients, they're "a huge chocolate wallop with a Chips Ahoy size and texture. Fueling up rarely tastes so good."

PRO TIPS

>>Chewy Add 2 tablespoons of applesauce or plain yogurt if you like your cookies extra moist.

>>Done right Finishing time will vary a bit depending on your oven and the humidity and elevation of where you live.

>>Protein boost Turn these into recovery cookies by adding 2 to 3 tablespoons of whey protein powder (and applesauce or yogurt to compensate for more dry ingredients).

>>Pack-proof Store in an airtight container, separated if possible, to avoid a massive, single cookie-ball.

GET MORE!

Kitchen-shy? Watch a video tutorial about baking these cookies from the wizards at Skratch Labs at climbing.com/cookie.

BY THE NUMBERS: Bar vs. Cookie

CLIF BAR
CHOCOLATE CHIP FLAVOR (1 BAR)

Ingredients: 27
Calories: 240 cal
Fat: 5g
Protein: 10g
Sodium: 150mg
Fiber: 4g
Water content: 10%

HOMEMADE, PORTABLE GLUTEN-FREE
CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIE (3 COOKIES)

Ingredients: 11
Calories: 273 cal
Fat: 9g
Protein: 6g
Sodium: 348mg
Fiber: 3g
Water content: 43%

Change It Up

Hell froze over, and you're tired of chocolate chips, or—gasp—never liked them in the first place? Try these variations*:

Snickerdoodle Cookies

Out:
cocoa powder
chocolate chips

Changes:
¼ teaspoon cream of tartar
2 tablespoons brown sugar

Top With:
sugar
cinnamon

Nutrition Facts per serving (1 cookie)	
Energy 84 cal	**Carbs** 15g
Fat 2g	**Fiber** 1g
Sodium 64mg	**Protein** 2g

Nut Butter Cookies

Out:
cocoa powder
chocolate chips
coconut oil

Changes:
¼ cup potato flour
2 teaspoons brown sugar
¼ cup almond butter (or any nut butter)

Top With:
sliced almonds

Nutrition Facts per serving (1 cookie)	
Energy 93 cal	**Carbs** 15g
Fat 4g	**Fiber** 1g
Sodium 84mg	**Protein** 2g

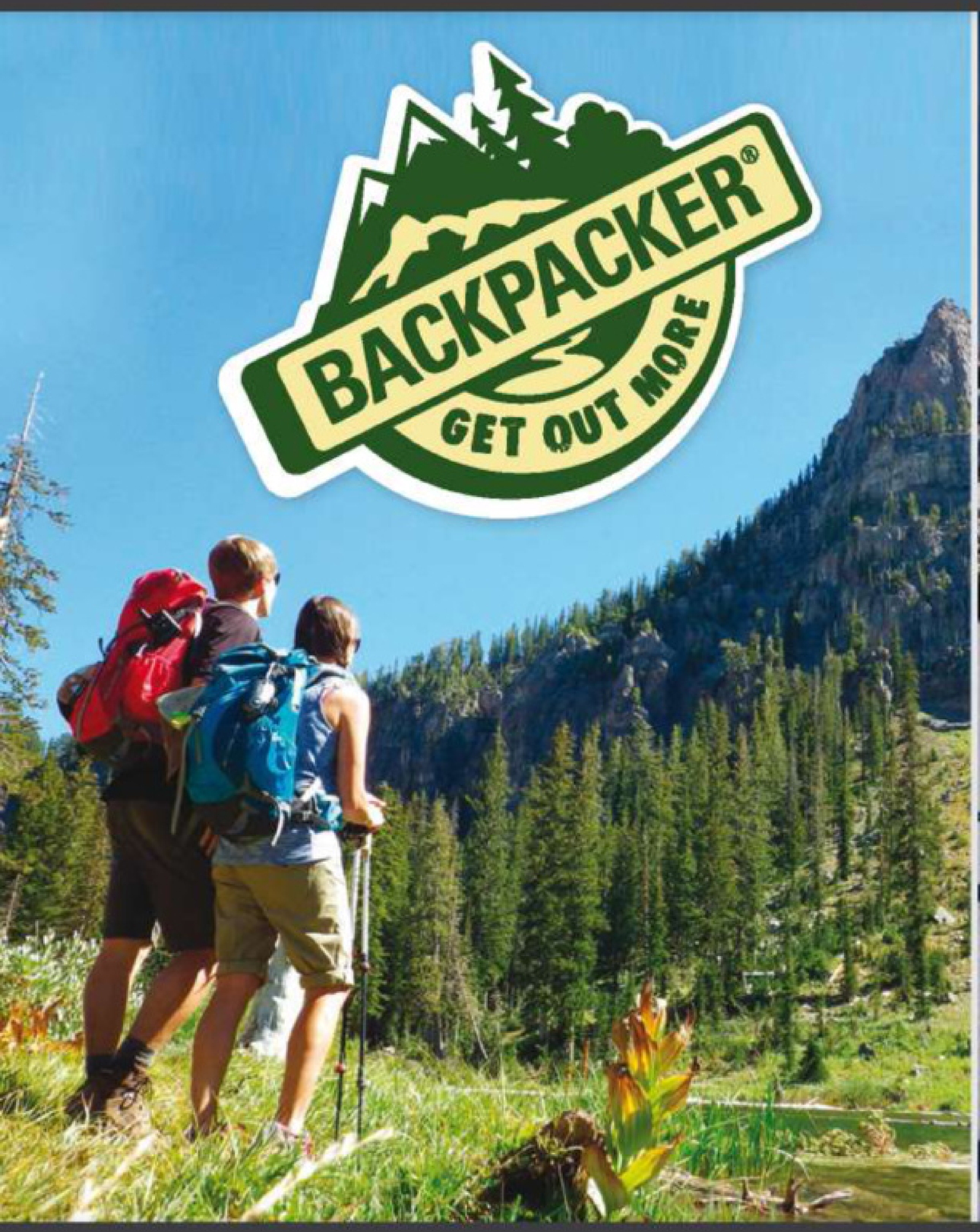
*Use same baking directions as chocolate chip cookies.

COURTESY (3)

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Crag Packs

Necessity is the mother of invention, and it's also the inspiration behind the development of the much-loved crag pack. As an offshoot of general-use outdoor packs, crag bags have evolved to incorporate all the bells and whistles that craggers need in a streamlined and burly package that's just large enough to hold a day's worth of gear. With easily accessible guidebook pockets (for the ubiquitous, on-the-fly guidebook checks), full-length zippers that let the pack act as a staging area for all your trinkets, comfortable suspension systems for long approaches, briefcase handles for dragging from route to route, and many other crag-specific features that every climber needs in his go-to climbing pack. Check out the laundry list of extras on one of our testers' favorite haulers here, and then turn the page for the five best of 2015.



JULIE ELLISON

Everything in Its Place

5 smart packs with climber-friendly features

BY JULIE ELLISON AND J.P. WHITEHEAD

Whether sport or trad, there's not much better in this world than going out for a day of climbing with your friends, and getting gear to the crag should make your day easier and more fun instead of complicated and frustrating. Enter the most climber-friendly bag on the planet: the much-loved crag pack. With all the detail-oriented features a climber could ever want in a spacious hauler that's easy to carry, your crag pack is the Subaru for all your gear. Our testers couldn't agree more, putting these packs through their paces from Smith Rock, Oregon, to Foster Falls, Tennessee, to Yosemite, California, and a dozen places in between. What they came back with was this short list of winners—five packs that we honestly love.

Crag Pack

Trango Crag Pack

$99; trango.com



Patagonia Crag Daddy 45

$179; patagonia.com



Performance

With the simple design of a haulbag and the smart features of a crag pack, this bag has a big range of functionality. As one tester put it, "It's really a two-in-one. It loads and functions much like a standard haulbag but carries as well as any dedicated alpine pack with its beefy, comfortable suspension." The wide foam hipbelt made for a comfy carry on a 2.5-mile hike into Lumpy Ridge, Colorado. Forty-eight liters in the main compartment easily swallows a full rack, a 70-meter rope, layers, food, and water, with room to spare. Testers loved the extra-large top-loading mouth that made dropping in a stuffed rope bag and a double rack super-easy, and the side access zipper let testers get to water bottles and layers on the go without having to go in from the top. They also loved the guidebook pocket that fits "even the thickest crag bible" and a mesh shoe pocket that prevents cramming and deforming high-end kicks, while also allowing them to air out, reducing stink. Reinforced Titan Wrap fabric in the body kept the pack upright when loading.

"This is my new go-to, the one pack I need for cragging," said one tester. With 45 liters of space, there's more than enough room for a day's worth of gear—and then some, which was perfect for our tester, who is an actual cragging daddy and needed to pack stuff for his kid along with the standard harness, draws, rope, etc. The full-length zipper down the center of the pack is perfect for easy loading and unloading, making pack-up time between pitches faster and more efficient. A sturdy foam backpanel and padded waistbelt and shoulder straps managed heavy loads up to 35 lbs. on steep approaches in Rocky Mountain National Park, and side compression straps made the carry stable even when the pack wasn't full. Ding: One of these straps runs directly over the external guidebook pocket, squishing anything inside and restricting access. Carry handles on the front made tossing the bag from route to route in Smith Rock a breeze, and an internal stash pocket kept small sundries separate from dirty metal gear.

Conclusion

A high-value hauler designed for everything from route-to-route sport cragging to moderate hikes in the alpine and everything in between. Climber-specific features mean this pack will help you climb more pitches in a day.

With a rope-carry system on top, this bag holds everything inside with some room to spare, and the full-length zipper makes access easy and painless. An easy-to-wear-all-day suspension system is comfortable, even with heavy loads.

Bottom Line

Full-featured, bargain workhorse

Accessible, Comfortable Carry-All

THE PROS' FAVORITE NON-CLIMBING GEAR

We asked some pro climbers what their favorite, most necessary, best-loved piece of non-climbing gear is. Here are their serious and somewhat silly answers.



Ben Spannuth:
"Glasses. I wouldn't have survived as a caveman."



Rob Pizem:
"My chainsaw. Nothing is more satisfying than cutting, chopping, and splitting wood for the winter!"



Jean-Pierre Ouellet:
"Super Glue! It helps to keep the climbing tape in place!"

THE KEEPER OF CRAGS

One in five climbing areas in the U.S. is threatened by an access issue, and for more than 20 years, the Access Fund has worked diligently to keep all climbing areas open and accessible by purchasing land, educating climbers on best practices, working with governments and landowners, and promoting stewardship. In 2014, the Access Fund granted $40,000 to various local climbing groups as part of the Climbing Preservation Grants Program, which successfully kept places like North Carolina's Linville Gorge, Kentucky's Red River Gorge, Massachusetts' Farley Ledges, and Colorado's Shelf Road open to climbing. The money also went toward acquiring lands at Clifton Bluff in Maine and Colorado's Unaweep Canyon cliffs, in addition to funding the creation of important climber coalitions in central Wyoming and the Pikes Peak region of Colorado. Check out *accessfund.org* for more info on how to get involved. *—J.P. WHITEHEAD*

Black Diamond Stone Duffel 42
$90; blackdiamondequipment.com



The accessibility of this pack-cum-duffel is top-notch, according to one tester who said we'd "have to pry it out of her cold, dead hands" to get it back. Her "throw-it-in-and-go" packing technique married perfectly with this hauler, whose full-length center zip saved her from any yard-sale headaches when unpacking. "I have immediate access to everything, and it's always ready to be toted to the next line," which meant less time sifting through a nest of gear and more time climbing. A top carry handle and two front carry handles let testers grab it any which way to move it, a great feature when dragging it down an entire cliff line, pitch by pitch in Clear Creek Canyon, Colorado. While the suspension seems minimal, the moldable plastic framesheet, padded backpanel, and webbing-only waistbelt still provided ample support for longer approaches lugging 25 lbs. of gear, with zero uncomfortable metal pokes and prods in the back. The pack even comes with a removable 1.2 x 1.5 meter rope tarp, which easily handled a 70-meter rope.

Full-length zipper and clever throw handles let you squeeze in more pitches in a session by spending less time packing and more time climbing. Testers appreciated the included rope tarp and simple design.

Simple Time Saver

Millet Rockland 38
$120; milletusa.com



This pack topped the testers' list for organization, thanks to two interior pockets: a small zippered mesh pocket for wallet, keys, and other personal items, and a larger zipperless pocket to keep chalkbag, shoes, and anything else separate. Gear loops at the top of the inside of the pack are perfect for keeping draws and pro in order and not ending up with a tangled mess. The huge U-zipper on the back of the pack lets you arrange exactly how you want because you can easily reach every square inch of the interior. This updated pack takes the original Millet crag hero, the Cliff Org, and adds burlier fabrics, heavier stitching, rugged YKK zippers, and a sturdier build. Testers also loved the new and unique Velcro rope carry system on top that was much faster and easier to operate than standard buckles, which you have to clip and then adjust. "With the Velcro, you're closing and adjusting all in one motion," one tester said. Downgrade: A small ½" webbing waistbelt made load transfer uncomfortable with a full pack for anything but short approaches.

This updated Millet pack is now extra-burly and one of the most durable in the test, and the U-shaped access in the back makes arranging gear a snap, especially with the interior pockets and gear loops.

Organization King

DMM Vector
$130; dmmclimbing.com



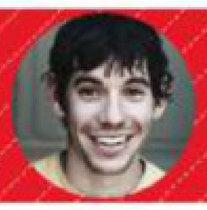
"Never have I seen such a perfect pack for trad climbers!" one tester exclaimed about the new Vector hauler after dragging it from the High Peaks Wilderness of New York to various European crags. "The Racksack is a standout inclusion for me," he said of the removable pouch that takes all your pro (up to a double rack) and puts it into its own compartment that then easily slides into this lidless toploader and keeps everything out of the dirt. "No cams poked me in the back, and my rack was pre-sorted, saving time and stress." Although this is a more traditional top-loading pack (no side access zippers), a reinforced, flat bottom and internal stiffeners in the body and at the mouth mean the Vector not only stands up completely on its own, but the access point at the top stays open, making it a total breeze to pack and unpack. An extra-cushy backpanel, wide waistbelt, and contoured shoulder straps made it extremely comfortable to carry, even when loaded down with two half ropes, full double rack, helmet, food, layers, and water.

Easy to pack, unpack, and carry, with a few extra features that are ideal for trad climbers: included separate Racksack, zippered guidebook pocket on the side, and a 45-liter capacity to haul everything a gear-plugger needs.

Super-Smart Trad



Sasha DiGiulian:
"My GoPro for documenting my adventures."



Alex Honnold:
"My smartphone, as lame as it sounds. I always bring it up the wall now."



Beth Rodden:
"My thermos!"



Will Stanhope:
"My Swiss Army Knife, for cutting webbing for rap anchors and opening ice-cold IPAs."



Tommy Caldwell:
"My National Parks Annual Pass."

Field Notes

The latest and greatest from our diligent testers

BY JULIE ELLISON

→ *AIRY ALL-AROUND HARNESS*

Arc'teryx AR-395a

"Lightweight, a dreamy catch, and versatile—what more could I want?" asked one tester after three months of using the new AR-395a on everything from eight-pitch alpine routes to projecting 5.12s in Clear Creek Canyon, Colorado. This rig is designed for every discipline, with adjustable leg loops for changing temps, four ice-clipper slots for ice climbing season, four huge gear loops that easily hold a double rack, and super-wide leg loops and waistbelt for cushy comfort when falling over and over on a hard sport climb. Testers found the double-weave fabric was soft next to skin and durable enough for chimneying on rough gneiss and sandstone, and the proprietary Warp Strength Technology design distributes pressure evenly across the waistbelt and leg loops. Testers never experienced hot spots or felt like the harness was digging in. Ding: If it's not sized perfectly, the gear loops will sit slightly far back so you have to twist to see what piece you're grabbing. At 13.9 oz., this ultra-light harness added practically no weight for big backcountry missions, and it packed down to the size of a large cucumber. ***$159; arcteryx.com***

→ *ULTRA-LIGHT, ADJUSTABLE ALPINE PACK*

The North Face Shadow 30 + 10

After all-day approaches and routes in the Tetons, one tester was smitten over the simple and useful Shadow pack. "We hiked in with the pack filled to the brim at 40 liters, then after gearing up, it cinched down small and still felt really stable while doing balance-intensive moves way off the deck," one tester said of the Shadow's adjustable capacity from 30 liters to 40. Testers removed the padding from the waistbelt to turn it into a low-profile webbing strap that stayed out of the way when climbing, and the roll-top closure was quick to open and close—a great feature since this pack has no easy-access pockets on the outside. One of the favorite features was the internal removable sundries pocket, designed with the idea that you pull it out, pack all the small goodies you'll need for the day, and then put it in last. This straightforward hauler had some of the best and most comfortable suspension we've tested, especially for being so light at 2 lbs. and having just a removable framesheet for support. "If you need a pack to climb in that's comfortable to carry under weight—this is it." ***$149; thenorthface.com***

→ *COMPACT HEAD TORCH OF THE FUTURE*

Black Diamond Ion

Taking a cue from our smartphone-obsessed culture, the Ion employs a rad "how did they do that?" swipe sensor on this small, futuristic headlamp. Swipe one way for white light, the other for red, and hold down for the dimming feature to choose just the right amount of output. One tester said, "It rivals my other emergency-only lights with its tiny size and miniscule weight, but it's more like my bright torches with its surprisingly powerful light." At just under 2 oz., it won't add any heft to your pack, but it offers 80 lumens, color and strobe options, and a lock feature that will prevent it from unintentionally lighting up the inside of your pack or pocket. It takes AAA batteries (lithium, alkaline, or rechargeable) and was still comfortable to wear after a few hours on a sweaty forehead. ***$25; blackdiamondequipment.com***

→ *FEATURE-FILLED, QUIVER-OF-ONE CRASHPAD*

Petzl Cirro

"This thing is totally badass—big landing area plus super-thick pad equals happy ankles, butt, and back," one tester said of the extra-large Cirro pad that measures 58" x 46" x 5", "but it's still a delight to carry." That's thanks to the wide, padded shoulder straps and waistbelt, which both attach via Velcro that made for quick support and simple adjustments. The hinge-free taco-fold design combined with a zippered flap that encloses the bottom and side mean you can easily dump tons of gear (shoes, water, food, layers, phone) in the pad without losing anything on the trail. And once you open the pad to put it to use, that fabric flap actually flips and zips to the other side, covering the shoulder straps. This configuration puts all the dirt and mud from ground contact on the inside of the pad instead of the outside against your back. Plus, no hinge means no weak spot in the center of the pad for bottoming out or ankle sprains. Although zipping and unzipping the pad can take a little extra time, designers also added a quick-carry shoulder strap and buckle that allows you to speedily close the pad and carry it under your arm to the next boulder. Oh, and that strap lets you set the pad up into a mini-couch. "If I could only have one pad, it'd be this one." ***$399; petzl.com***









Training Requirements

8 items for a winter of working hard in the gym

BY JULIE ELLISON



SKLZ ACCUROLLER

"An absolute must-have for every climber—period," is how one tester described this compact recovery tool. "It's an inexpensive do-it-all massager you can use for virtually any screaming muscle." Testers configured it in a number of positions, including cranking down on tight forearm muscles. The extended reach of the straps made it easy to put it behind the back to target shoulders, lats, neck, and upper back, all those spots that get jacked up from climbing and sitting at a desk. The smaller rollers allowed testers to massage a large area and then hone in on a trigger point with the large balls on either side. Convenience: It's small and light enough to throw in your luggage. ***$40; sklz.com***

THE NORTH FACE ULTRA KILOWATT TRAINER

When it's time to train off the wall, this is the only shoe you'll ever need. After six months of use in The Alpine Training Center (*thealpinetrainingcenter.com*) in Boulder, Colorado, our four testers were in love with these shoes. "They're minimalist like a climbing shoe, with the design and support of a trail runner, perfect for running sprints outside and then doing climbing intervals on the systems board," one tester said. The North Face designed these shoes for climbers and skiers who are doing unique indoor training for big objectives. Proprietary FlashDry on the inside and mesh on a majority of the upper made these super breathable, but they're reinforced in high-wear zones. ***$120; thenorthface.com***

GO GNARLY

Recovery time is just as important as training time, and this protein supplement maximizes it. "After an intense session, I used to go down for a while, but this helped me bounce back within a few hours," one tester said after taking the post mix for four months. "During a difficult alpine-training regimen, this helped me put 5 lbs. of muscle on, and I'm climbing stronger than ever." Testers loved the vanilla and chocolate, which come in pre-, during-, and post-workout blends. ***$51 (40 servings); gognarly.com***

BELAGGLES BELAY GLASSES

Scoff if you will, we love our belay glasses. Although they've been around for a few years in various iterations, we found the Belaggles to be the most comfortable with the widest range of view. These glasses utilize a prism so you can keep your head and neck in a neutral position, and with eyes looking straight ahead, you can see directly above you. "They're brilliant!" said one climber. "I've avoided belayer's neck for 10 years, but aches have crept up on me. With these, I've had no more pain—they literally saved my neck." We loved them for cragging, but you'll also find them ideal for long gym days. ***$90; belaggles.com***

METOLIUS GYM BAG

Simple, useable, affordable—this duffel-meets–messenger bag fits everything you need for the gym, whether you're headed to crank out 20 pitches or a weight room session. This 28-liter pack has a full-length zipper and a wide-mouth opening, making it easy to dump all your gear in. Testers used the single shoulder strap to carry it to and from the car, and at the gym they grabbed the two briefcase handles to move it from climb to climb. One large outer zip pocket was ideal for sundries, with a dedicated cell phone pocket and key clip. ***$30; metoliusclimbing.com***

ICEBREAKER ATOM LONG SLEEVE ZIP

This midlayer was one tester's go-to piece for winter workouts, and after wearing it three times a week for three months with only one wash, it never stank and still performed perfectly. Credit merino wool wrapped around a nylon core, which offers the comfort, warmth, and stink-free properties of merino with the durability and bounce-back of nylon. "It felt great next to skin, so I could wear a tank top underneath without discomfort," one tester said. The Atom has full range of motion for whatever your chosen training activity, and it was surprisingly warm for the weight. The low-profile design felt athletic on the body, not bulky like a sweatshirt. ***$200; icebreaker.com***

CAMELBAK CHUTE

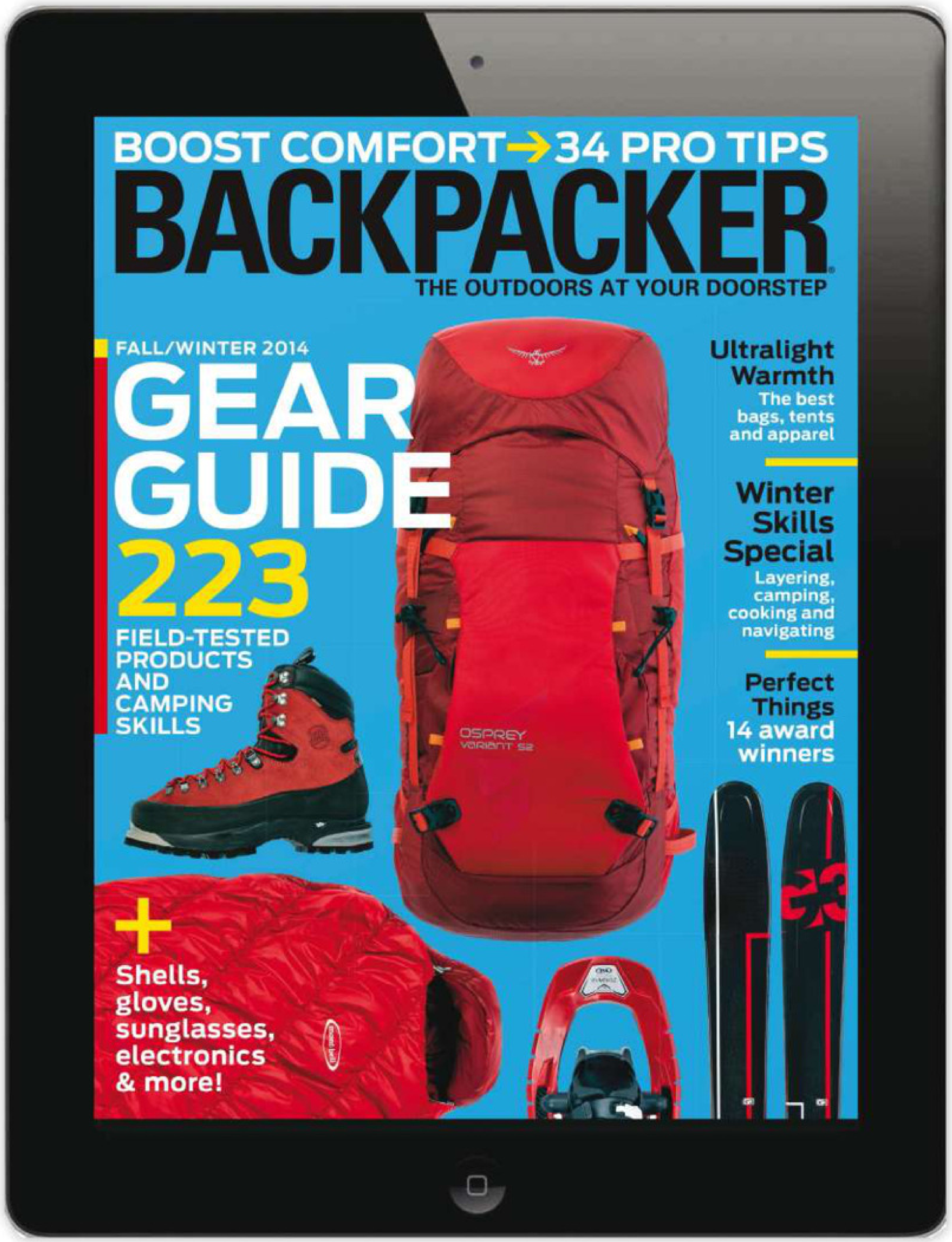
The Chute is just that: Testers found the wide and angled spout easy to chug from in the middle of an intense workout. Close the spout with the large and easy-to-operate cap to prevent spills, or clip it out of the way when drinking often (you won't get bonked in the nose from a swinging lid). "No more sucking through an impossibly small straw or needle-size opening—just open and chug!" ***$14; camelbak.com***

SKRATCH LABS EXERCISE HYDRATION MIX

When your body is working hard, it needs more than just H2O. We love Skratch Labs Hydration Mix, an all-natural electrolyte blend that's "all real stuff, just dried fruit dust, salts, and sugars," as one tester said, no chemicals or ingredients you can't pronounce. It replaces the liquid and electrolytes you lose through sweat, and it offers more calories to keep your body running efficiently without bonking. "I do notice a difference with this: no slumps," one tester said, "and it keeps me going longer than just water." ***$20 (20 servings); skratchlabs.com***

JULIE ELLISON

FREE
FALL / WINTER GEAR GUIDE



Get an enhanced edition of our annual Fall/Winter Gear Guide, featuring video reviews of our Editors' Choice Snow Award winners.

Download on the App Store

ONE-HANDED HITCHES

By Julie Ellison

LEARN TO TIE A MUNTER AND A CLOVE HITCH WITH ONE HAND
The crucial equation in alpine climbing—efficiency equals speed, which equals safety—means that every second saved at a belay transition is another second spent getting to the top. One simple (and pretty suave) time saver is tying two often-used hitches—the Munter and the clove—with one hand. You might be at a sketchy stance with one hand on the rock for balance while you build the anchor and clove yourself in, or you might be simul-climbing and suddenly need to put your partner on belay quickly with a Munter. Whatever the scenario, learning to tie both hitches one-handed will help improve your overall efficiency on long routes (and impress your friends to boot). Plus, they're easy to learn and will quickly become muscle memory.

CLOVE

This hitch is used most often as a way to connect yourself to the anchor. Not only is the clove hitch easy to tie (one- or two-handed), but the beauty of it is that you can adjust the length of the rope on either side of the hitch without untying it.



Clip into the carabiner like you would when leading, with your side of the rope on top—coming up through the biner and away from the wall.



Reach across your rope and grab the bottom strand. Pull it up slightly and create a small loop, with the bottom part of the rope on top.



Bring the loop across your rope and, with palm facing gate, clip on the biner.



Pull on each strand to tighten it up, and you've got a clove hitch.

MUNTER

Every climber should be able to quickly tie a Munter; you can use it to belay or rappel if you drop your belay device. Plus, it's good for de-icing the rope in frozen conditions. However, it will kink your rope much more than a standard belay device.



Start the same way as the clove hitch, with your rope coming up through the biner and away from the wall.



Grab the strand behind the biner with your hand palm up and flick your wrist toward the biner to create a loop (bottom section of rope on top).



Turn that loop so your knuckles are facing the biner and clip it on.



Pull on each strand to tighten; the Munter should flip through the biner.

JULIE ELLISON (8)

ACCIDENTAL UNCLIPPING

By Kevin Corrigan

PREVENT EXTENDED GEAR FROM COMING UNCLIPPED

In August 2014, Wayne Crill fell 70 feet while attempting a first ascent in Eldorado Canyon, Colorado. Though he was wearing a helmet, he suffered a serious head injury and still faces a long road to recovery. According to the accident report, Crill had placed nine pieces of protection before traveling 10 feet above his last piece and placing a slider nut and a nut with a Screamer, which is a shock-absorbing sling designed to minimize impact on a piece of pro. When he fell, the Screamer ripped (like it's supposed to), but both pieces still popped out. His next two pieces stayed in place, but the rope detached from each of them, which introduced enough slack for him to hit the ground. The two rope-side carabiners somehow had unclipped from the slings attached to the pieces. The climber seemingly did everything right, so let's examine what went wrong and outline how to prevent it from happening to you.

ANALYSIS

Crill had extended his gear with alpine quickdraws (two carabiners on a single-length sling) to clip into his protection. Accident investigators considered gate flutter (when the gate momentarily opens because of a bump against the rock or other obstacle), but all the carabiners were wiregates, which made this scenario unlikely. Wiregates do experience gate flutter, but the gate doesn't open as wide or for as long a duration as a standard gate, making the possibility of the sling coming unclipped from this scenario very improbable. Investigators determined the most likely explanation is that when the top pieces pulled from the wall, this caused the rope to whip around violently. This then led to the rope-side carabiners on the next two pieces flipping upside down (fig. 1) and landing with the gate on top of the sling, a situation very similar to back-clipping a quickdraw. At this point, the force of the fall caused the carabiners to unclip from the slings (fig. 2). Many in the climbing community have dismissed the incident as a freak accident, but the fact remains that it happened twice in one fall. We talked to IFMGA-certified guide Joey Thompson, who has witnessed biners unclip themselves, to learn how climbers can prevent this type of accident.

THE HITCH CONUNDRUM

This accident sparked healthy discussion across online climbing message boards, and a suggestion made by many climbers was to girth- or clove-hitch the rope-side carabiner to the sling to hold it in place. Girth-hitching is particularly bad on Dyneema slings because it weakens the sling directly at the spot where it cinches, meaning it can fail under a much smaller load than its strength rating. Clove-hitching can also reduce the overall strength of the sling, and Thompson says, "As a mountain guide, I use the materials based on the manufacturer's recommendations, and until I get some drop-testing results on the clove-hitch setup, I can't recommend it."

JOEY THOMPSON

In 2013 the AMGA recognized Joey Thompson as Outstanding Guide of the Year, and in summer 2014, Thompson became the 92nd person in the U.S. to become an IFMGA-certified guide. Check him out at mountainguidejoeyt.com.

fig. 1

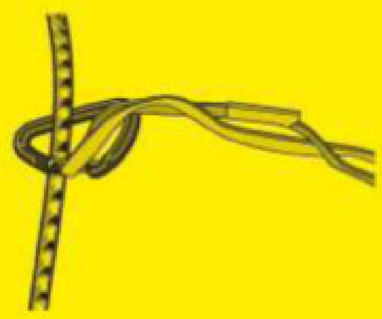
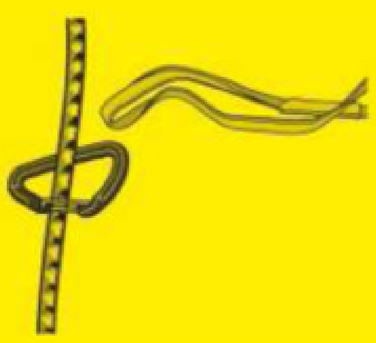


fig. 2



Prevention Options

- Use two biners on the rope in an opposite and opposed configuration (*climbing.com/skill/opposite-and-opposed*). If you're extending with an alpine quickdraw, you will already have an extra biner on the gear, just relocate it to the rope end of the sling.
- Use half ropes, which add an extra layer of safety by reducing the vectors (and thus reducing force) on your pro and provide an independent backup, should one rope fail.
- When you place gear, make sure slings are running straight without twists.
- Clip the rope-side biner so the spine is toward the direction you're traveling. This helps ensure that only the spine and rope basket will be loaded in a fall, not the gate.
- Try a locking carabiner on the rope end, but make sure it's easy to operate with one hand. Practice opening and clipping it on the ground to get it as dialed as possible. We like the Black Diamond Magnetron and Edelrid Strike Slider for their ease of one-hand use.
- Extend gear properly so the rope doesn't zigzag, which increases the force put onto gear in a fall and makes it more likely for pro to pop out. Check out *climbing.com/skill/extension-basics* and *climbing.com/skill/extension-102* for techniques. A zigzagging rope is also more likely to whip around unpredictably like the rope that contributed to the Eldo accident.

SUPERCORN (2); SKIP STERLING (RIGHT)

BOMBER ICE ANCHORS

By Ian Nicholson

BUILD A MAXIMUM-STRENGTH ANCHOR IN ICE WITH TWO PIECES
Standard ice anchors often involve only two pieces of protection, instead of the three pieces that we typically use in rock climbing, because in strong, reliable ice, two ice screws are plenty strong enough. Plus, placing two screws takes way less time and helps you move faster in this super-cold environment. Because of this standard, ice enthusiasts need to be very specific about the structure of the anchor, particularly the angle of the ice screws in the ice as well as the orientation of the two pieces in relation to each other. Building the anchor in this specific configuration doesn't take any extra time, but it will maximize the strength of this minimalist anchor.

First and Foremost

Once you've found where you want to build your belay, visually inspect the ice to make sure it's as solid as possible. The ice should be clear or slightly blue; if it is solid white, then the ice is rotten. Obviously, cracks and running water (even water running behind thin ice) are bad. Avoid building your anchor on bulges where the ice bends outward and is less supported; instead, aim for depressions and concavities where the ice bends inward, which typically will be more solid because of the strength and support from surrounding ice.

fig. 1



SKIP STERLING (BOTTOM RIGHT)

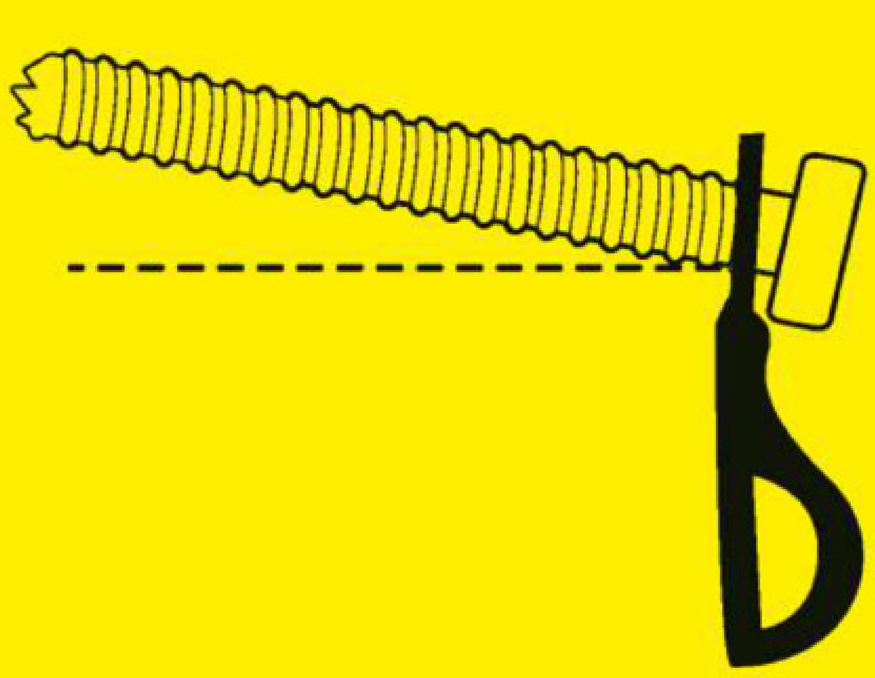
PLACEMENT

First, the ice screws need to be at least 12" apart, with 18" to 24" being ideal, especially if the ice is suspect. If the ice fractures, the greater distance will reduce the chance that both screws will be affected by the same crack. When placing these screws, offset them from each other vertically, so one sits at least 12" to 18" higher (fig. 1). They can even be stacked perfectly in line as long as one is above the other. This does two major things. It reduces the vector forces put on the ice screws. To put it simply, the lower the angle between the two screws, the less force is applied to each and the closer you'll get to each screw taking about the same amount of load. The second reason for offsetting screws vertically is that water ice tends to fracture horizontally as opposed to vertically. So if the ice does crack, having both your screws in one horizontal plane could be bad news. Equalize these pieces with a sling or cordelette, just like with rock anchors.

ANGLE

Contrary to what you might think, the best angle for the screws is slightly upward, meaning the hanger is slightly lower than the teeth in the ice. This counterintuitive method is better because the holding power comes from the threads themselves and not from a "snow picket" effect, meaning you don't get any mechanical advantage having the shaft of the screw levered against the ice (Fig. 2). That levering action is actually bad for the screw's overall holding power because when an ice screw fails, it's because the ice near the surface right below the hanger has failed. When the ice at the surface gives way, the shaft becomes exposed and only adds more torque, which will cause the ice to deteriorate further. Eventually with enough force, total failure occurs. Place ice screws at a 5° to 10° upward angle. More than 10° is too much because it will lever the screw as well. Pointing the screw slightly upward keeps the screw more in line with the load, minimizes the torque, and lets the threads do their job.

fig. 2





IAN NICHOLSON
*As an AMGA-certified alpine and rock guide, Ian Nicholson lives in Seattle with his wife, Rebecca, and he loves climbing in the North Cascades so much that he authored the guidebook to it (*SuperTopo: Washington Pass Climbing*).*

ADVANCED ROCK RESCUE

By Julie Ellison

LEARN TWO PRINCIPAL SELF-RESCUE SKILLS: HAULING AND LOWERING

There's an understood credo in climbing that every climbing team is responsible for their own safety, and knowing how to escape from a bad situation, whether it's injury, weather, or rockfall, should be in every climber's bag of tricks. Unfortunately, since learning and practicing these skills takes time away from actual climbing, very few climbers educate themselves about these essential self-rescue skills, and even fewer climbers regularly practice them. In an effort to expand and improve upon my own knowledge of self-rescue, I attended an Advanced Rock Rescue course offered by the REI Outdoor School. The class emphasized two skills—hauling and lowering—as the most important techniques to learn when first delving into self-rescue. While there are numerous ways to haul and lower, we've outlined simple and efficient methods that are versatile for a number of situations and easy to learn by beginners and longtime climbers alike.

Start Here

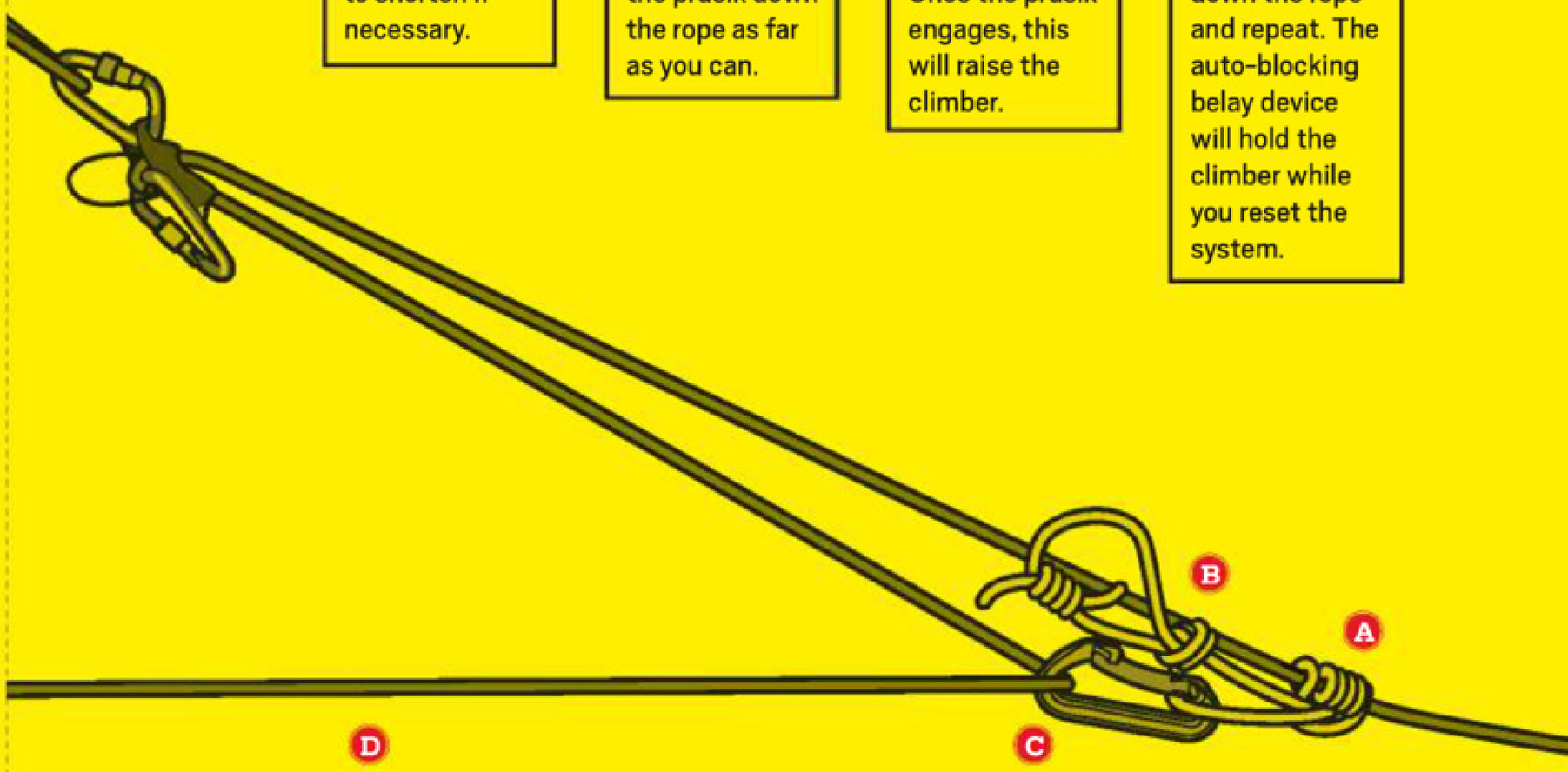
One of the first things veteran guide and senior instructor Paul Haraf made clear during the class is that there are infinite situations that might require some level of self-rescue, from spraining your ankle and not being able to complete a climb to a belayer being knocked unconscious from a falling rock. Because you can never predict what the exact circumstances might be, the most important factor are to have a thorough knowledge of what the systems are, how they work, and how to quickly and safely set them up. If you're well-versed in the systems, you can apply and adapt them to whatever situation you might find yourself in. That said, the majority of self-rescue scenarios will involve minor injuries that prevent you and your partner from finishing a route. Because of this, hauling your partner up to you and/or lowering him to the ground or a previous anchor are the most often-used techniques. **The skills outlined here involve top-down rescue, meaning you'll be hauling or lowering a follower (as opposed to a leader when belaying from below), with an auto-blocking belay device set up correctly on a solid anchor.** Lastly and perhaps most important: Practice, practice, practice! Haraf suggests setting up a practice station in your house so you can do it whenever you have a few free minutes.

1. Build a prusik (A) with a closed loop of cord on the weighted strand, and tie an overhand in the bight (B) to shorten if necessary.

2. Clip a non-locker inside the prusik loop, and then clip the brake strand of the rope into the biner (C). Slide the prusik down the rope as far as you can.

3. Using your legs (not just your arms) and your body weight, pull the brake strand (D) up toward the anchor. Once the prusik engages, this will raise the climber.

4. Keep pulling until the prusik is in a position where you can't pull efficiently any more. At that point, slide the prusik back down the rope and repeat. The auto-blocking belay device will hold the climber while you reset the system.



HAULING

The most basic system is a 3:1, also called a Z-pulley, meaning that for every three feet of rope you move through the system, you'll raise the climber one foot. A 3:1 system also means that you're reducing the weight of the hauled load by two-thirds, so in a frictionless world it would take 50 pounds of effort to raise a 150-pound climber. Of course, the real world has friction with the rope, the anchor, the rock, etc., so that number isn't exact, but it's relatively close.

Tips

- Clip into the anchor with a clove hitch on the rope, which allows you to change your distance from the anchor and get into a better position to see your follower.
- The anchor should be high, about chest height or above. This will help the rope run easier over any ledges or avoid them completely.
- You want at least a 3mm difference in diameter between cord and rope for maximum friction when applying hitches.
- Organization leads to less chaos, so put your own clip-in point on your side of the anchor and face biner gates up for better access and easier clipping/unclipping.
- Prusiks can only be built with cord; a Klemheist can use cord or slings.
- Every inch counts in these systems, so when sliding hitches and pulling rope, move them as far as possible every time, but keep them within reach. This might also mean tying an overhand in a prusik if it's too long.
- Visit *climbing.com/skill/save-yourself-a-guide-to-self-rescue* for a refresher on the prusik, Klemheist, Munter, auto-block, and Munter-mule-overhand.

+ For tons of class options from beginning rock climbing to advanced anchor clinics, check out rei.com/learn for listings in your area.

LOWERING

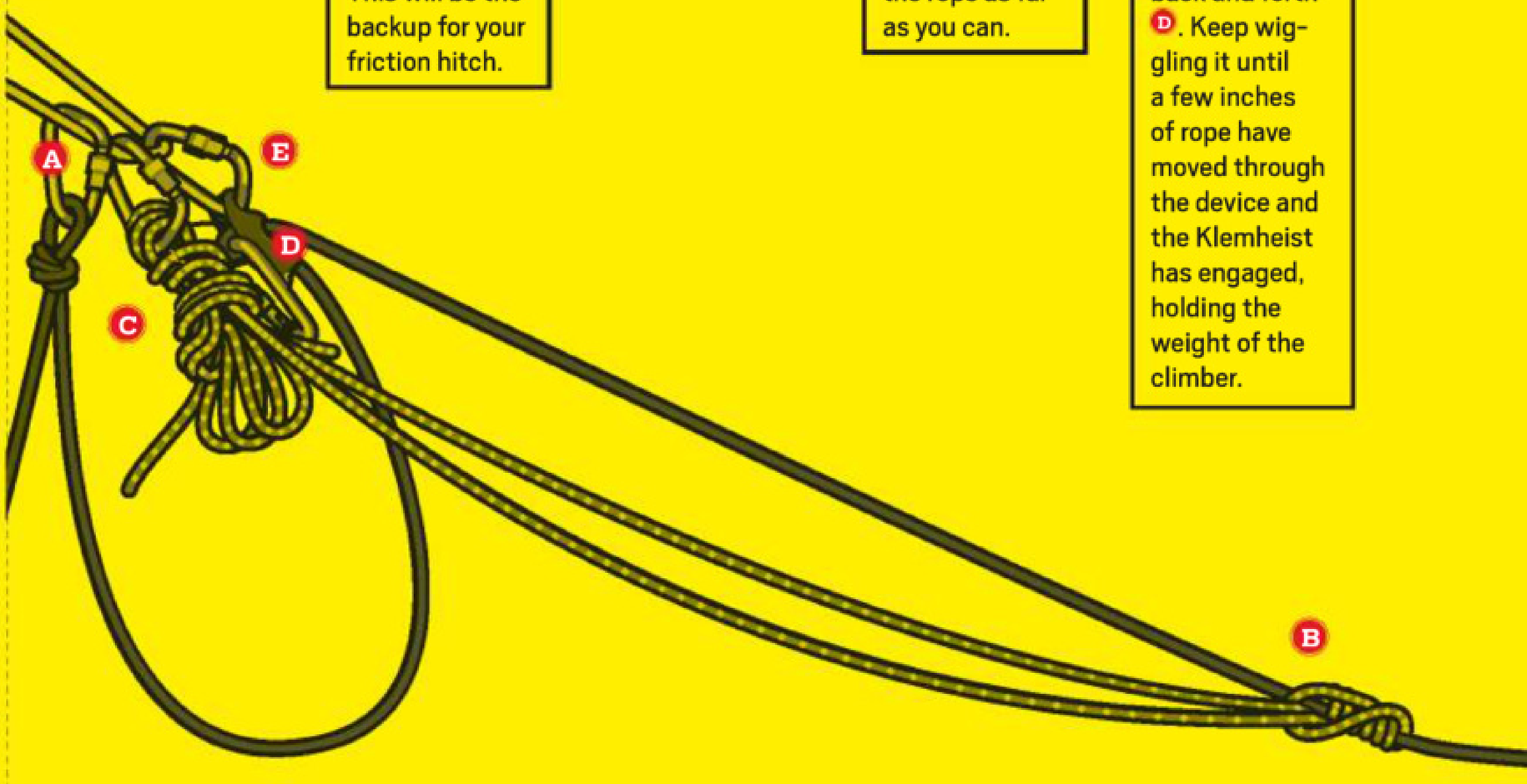
Lowering a climber with an auto-blocking belay device set up on the anchor is a topic fraught with debate. There are many schools of thought on how to do it safely, but in this skill, we're going to skip that controversy entirely and instead lower with a Munter hitch. This involves putting the follower on a friction hitch with a backup (Haraf says, "Never trust anyone's life to a single friction hitch!"), removing the belay device from the system, building a Munter, and using it to lower with an auto-block backup that's clipped directly to your belay loop.

1. From the belay device, take a few feet of the brake strand and tie an overhand on a bight, then clip that to the anchor with a locking biner (A). This will be the backup for your friction hitch.

2. Using a long cordelette or sling, tie a Klemheist on the climber's weighted strand of the rope (B).

3. With the other end of the cord, tie a Munter-mule-overhand on a locking biner that's clipped to the anchor (C). Slide the Klemheist down the rope as far as you can.

4. Transfer the weight of the climber from the belay device to the Klemheist by wiggling the biner clipped through the loop of the belay device back and forth (D). Keep wiggling it until a few inches of rope have moved through the device and the Klemheist has engaged, holding the weight of the climber.



5. Remove the belay device (B) completely from the setup, and with that section of rope, tie a Munter onto the locker that was holding the belay device on the anchor.

6. Pull slack through the Munter and tie an auto-block hitch with a closed loop of cord onto the brake strand (coming from the Munter) and clip it to your belay loop. Slide it up toward the Munter and sit back on it so it's engaged.

7. Untie the backup overhand that's clipped to the anchor (A). Slowly untie the Munter-mule-overhand on the cord, using the Munter part to transfer the weight of the climber from the cord to the rope. Then remove the cord entirely.

8. The climber's weight will be completely on the Munter hitch, your brake hand, and the auto-block backup.

9. With one hand on the auto-block and another higher on the brake strand, gently squeeze the auto-block so it disengages. Lower the climber as you normally would, using the auto-block as a backup.

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*photo courtesy of Eddie Bauer/Jake Norton

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Ask Answer Man

He knows climbing. *And he knows it.*

My shoes reek. It's affecting my relationships in a real way. Help?
—Tim L., Las Vegas, NV

When I received this question, Miss Answer Man (we're not married, but my name holds more prestige) insisted upon fielding the answer. She claims that she has extensive experience dealing with it.

"Tim, after years of driving around in cars housing festering climbing shoes, many climbers, particularly dudes, experience olfactory nerve damage and can no longer distinguish scents, good or bad. Thus, one's BO goes unnoticed by that person and those around him with similar disabilities. But generally not to their Sig O's. We are met with an aromatic assault each and every time we encounter your space. When the climber smells are contained to the gym and gym bags, we have no issue, but when it permeates into your personal lives (and especially your *really* personal lives), you have a problem, solved in one of two ways. First, cleaning. Wash your feet frequently. Then wash your shoes (in the sink with cool water or in a washing machine if the shoe is built to handle it). Keep stink in check with foot powder, dryer sheets, or an antibacterial spray like Lysol. The second option is to burn everything. Then find another hobby like cycling or golf that doesn't make your partner sick with nausea during the moments you're not actually participating."

My project is in an area lacking any good warm-ups, and I'm concerned about tweaking a finger. Got any tricks?
—Christopher P., New Castle, CO

To pop a pulley on such groundbreaking ascents would be a tragedy—nay—a travesty. Maybe both if Answer Man could remember his Latin. Who cares. Anyway, a few stand-ins for a proper warm-up routine:

>>It's not just about having your extremities stretched out and limber, part of it is about getting your whole body ready to work hard. Do a combination of a short jog, arm stretches, and pull-ups (find jugs or even a branch). It'll help prime those muscles for work.

>>The harder part, as you point out, is making sure your fingers don't snap under the pressure. Try traversing the base if that's an option, or find some holds to stretch on like a hangboard. Vary your grip. Move your feet around on different holds, getting into various body positions.

>>If it's really dire, consider bringing a set of Metolius Rock Rings. You'll look mental, but I figure given how remote and difficult these routes are, few people will be able to call your actions into question.

How can I get "good skin"?
—Rich B., Lawrence, KS

Apart from self-absorption, body-image issues, a general sense of malaise, and overuse of the word "literally," complaining about skin is the foremost similarity climbers share with teenage girls. Of course, most climbers aren't referring to some pock-faced prom photo; they're complaining about calluses being sloughed off their fingers and hands with every huck. Answer Man's interest in gold panning the Colorado foothills means his hands are a wreck, so I employed our sport's resident skin expert, Daniel Woods, to clear the air.

"Climbing is obviously finger intensive, so it's important to maintain and strengthen your skin. Certain types of rock also require callused tips or softer. Good granite skin for me is thick, dry, almost dead-like. Sandstone skin is softer, malleable, more alive. Limestone is soft, yet dry. My skin kit includes clippers for cutting off larger flaps of skin. Do this when the skin is at risk of peeling back more. Then use an emery board to sand it down to an even layer so it will heal faster. I use isopropyl alcohol to eliminate any oils on my skin before a session, and I apply Antihydral once every two weeks to eliminate sweating. When my skin is raw and ravaged, I apply a couple layers of Giddy cream for faster healing. Having good skin is just as key as anything else in climbing!"

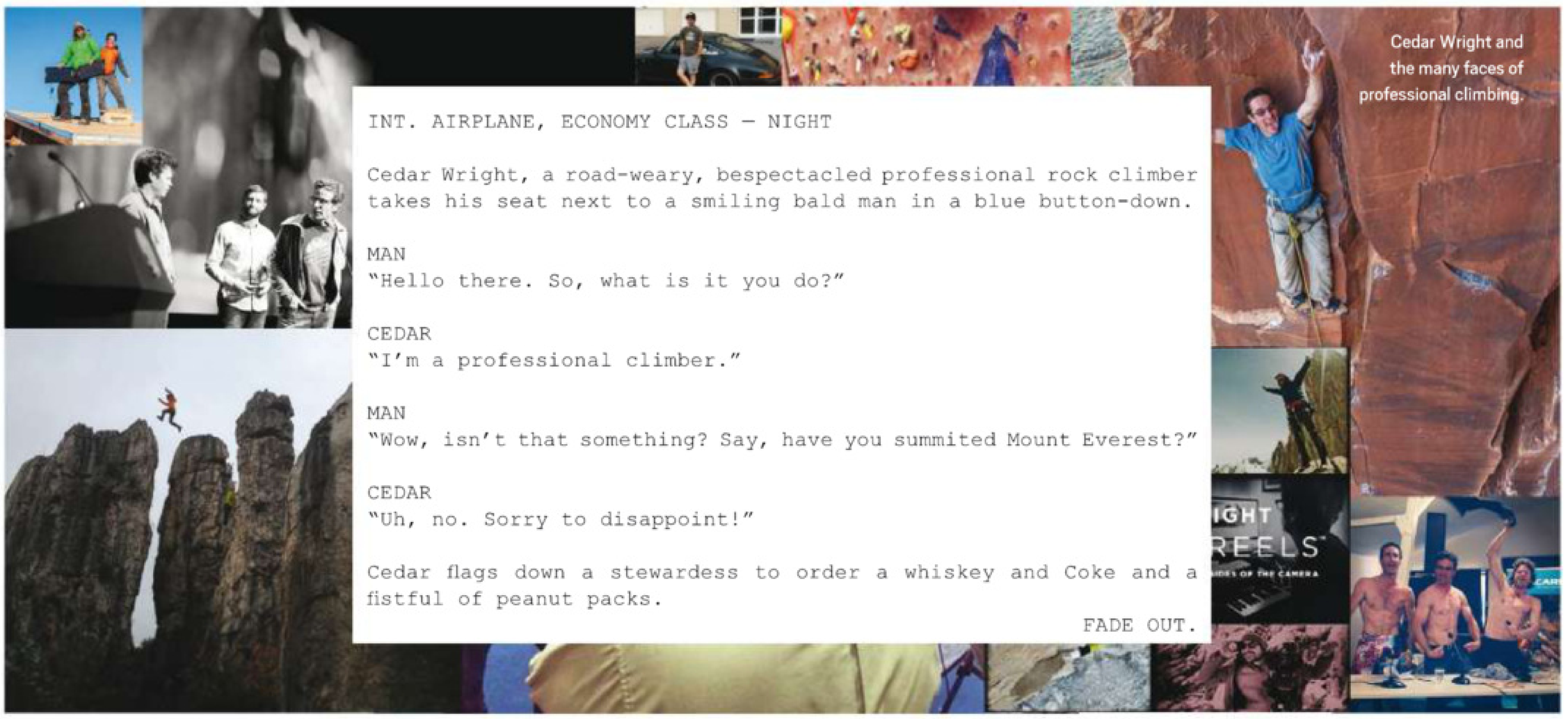
Got a burning question about climber etiquette, customs, or values? Email **answerman@climbing.com**.

AND OTHER TOPICS... **Figure 8 or bowline? Loop, swoop, and pull. Don't complicate your shoe knot. // Quickdraw gates in or out? Pre-hung. // Thoughts on five-finger shoes at the crag? God, you'll do anything for $8, huh? // What's with socks and climbing shoes? Better question: What's with socks and sandals?**

BRETT AFFRUNTI

Trust Me, I'm a Professional

BY CEDAR WRIGHT



Cedar Wright and the many faces of professional climbing.

Argh! Scenes like this happen so often that I used to give the vague answer of "self-employed" and leave it at that. Given my stubborn adherence to dirtbagdom, some people probably imagine that I have an illicit occupation such as drug dealer, hit man, or human trafficker, or am actually just unemployed. Which is fine by me—because I'm not joining the conga line on the world's highest tourist trail anytime soon just to finally answer yes to the dreaded Big E question.

But the truth is, once you get past the crushing disappointment at my lack of Everest summits, my job is kind of complicated. In fact, no two professional climbers' jobs are exactly the same. I explain that I'm more of an "adventure rock climber," and that I like to explore the world and come back with stories and short films about my adventures. I explain that I've been on The North Face climbing team for more than 10 years, and that they use our adventures and stories in their marketing campaigns while we act as ambassadors of sorts, often traveling for public speaking and appearances.

"And they pay you to do that?" is the standard reply. While it might sound like one long vacation on the surface, it's definitely a job, and sometimes it feels like I'm juggling Zen koans in a wormhole while reciting the ABCs backward.

For those who are genuinely curious about what the hell it takes to be a pro climber, well, good question! I'd wager that every pro has to have at least these six qualities to patch together this dream job: climbing ability (duh), the vision to find and pull off notable climbs, a compelling personality, media savvy (writing, filmmaking, or photography, for example), a healthy work ethic, and luck. A seventh quality of drop-dead good looks doesn't hurt either—shout-out to Sierra Blair-Coyle. If this were a game scored on a 1 to 5 scale in each category, I'd say you need to score at least a 21 to have a sustainable career as a climber, and that scoring very high in at least one area really helps seal the deal. If it all adds up and you have the points you need to be a professional climber, you win the dubious opportunity to enter the rarified air of the least lucrative of all professional sports. I'm guessing top Ping-Pong players make more. In fact, most people I know who call themselves professional climbers are getting a full refund on their taxes. The few who scratch above the poverty line are probably working with one of the larger apparel companies, which typically is a pro climber's biggest sponsor.

While the traits I mentioned above are helpful, there is no secret recipe. There are those that build their careers mostly on their superhuman ability, the Sharmas and the Ondras who simply climb a cut above the rest. Sharma is also one of those rare individuals who scores very highly across the board; he's mind-bogglingly strong, forever in

the best climbing films, has an alluring, mystic surfer-bro personality, and let's face it, is wickedly handsome. I may prefer Ondra's giraffe-meets-Harry Potter looks and love his banshee screams, but what do I know? There is, obviously and of course, Mr. Alex Honnold, but as Peter Mortimer from Sender Films recently said, Alex is bigger than climbing. So we'll leave him out of this discussion.

Luckily, not every pro climber has to pull on the tiniest crimpers to make a living, like say, Joe Kinder, a super-nice guy with a wild personality, social media savvy, frequent short films, and intense hustle. Sponsors dig that. Climbers who have the most longevity in their careers are creative and open to reinventing themselves, too. Consider Emily Harrington. She started as a world-class competition climber, then went on to become an accomplished mixed climber and mountaineer. Heck, even Emily can say yes to the dreaded Everest question!

But then there's me. As undeniably sexy and lucky as I am, I don't knock it out of the park in any one of those categories. I mean, there are 10-year-olds in my hometown of Boulder, Colorado, who climb circles around me (though if there were more overhanging offwidths and RP-protected leg-breaker runouts in the gym, it'd be a different story). I work all the angles to keep this weird, amorphous thing called a climbing career going, but at the foundation is a simple, deep love for rock climbing. That passion has fueled big first ascents in Yosemite and expeditions to places like Alaska and Pakistan, and all the stories and media I come back with. It also fueled my past six months, without question the busiest I've ever had. It may have taken a year or so off my life, but it also enabled me to live another year as a pro climber. The following is a taste of what it was like.

I'll start with the 45 desert towers and 800 miles of biking I did with Honnold (it's impossible not to mention him), during which I also directed a small film crew. I barely survived Honnold's robotic ability to climb without rest, which flew by in a blur of choss, wind, sand, and gnar. Then I went home to edit the film ("Sufferfest 2") with my buddy Austin Siadak. We spent weeks locked in my basement putting hundreds of hours of footage into a cohesive story. During that month, I also went to Yosemite for a video shoot and Austin, Texas, and Minneapolis for speaking engagements. As you're beginning to see, being a professional climber isn't just about climbing.

Somewhere near the end of the edit for "Sufferfest 2," I felt the tortured artist's weight of the world crushing down on my shoulders. This movie was my baby, but was it even any good? What if the last few months of my life had been consumed in the creation of a shitty film that people hated? With existential dread, we exported the final version and submitted it to the Banff Mountain Film Festival, the largest adventure film fest in the world. And waited. I'd spent the last month staying fit by training in the gym, and now I threw my angst out onto real rock, repeating a couple of dangerous R/X routes, which had the remarkably therapeutic effect of reminding me that I did, in fact, very much value and love being alive! As much as I love filmmaking, I love climbing even more for this natural healing.

Later, I heard through the grapevine that "Sufferfest 2" might not make Banff, and I contemplated dropping all of my sponsors and moving into a van down by the river where all the pressures and oddities of my bizarre way of life would fade slowly away. Of course, I quickly realized that I'm married with a mortgage and a very cute dog to feed and that I thrive on the bizarreness and uncertainty of my esoteric "job." It's worth mentioning here that I am blessed to have a woman who supports my wild ways and doesn't mind spending only half the year with me. Five dark days later (in which I also had video shoots in Moab and NYC), I found out that "Sufferfest 2" was going to get played at Banff. Life is a roller coaster. And with that, I took off for Australia to speak at the Australian Climbing Festival. I had also scheduled a couple weeks to climb at Arapiles with fellow professional climber Hazel Findlay, one badass, bold trad climber and a wonderfully down-to-earth, real-hearted person.

Climbing with Hazel gave me a peek into her version of what it is to be a pro climber, which is all about climbing, not posing. She got mad at me when I wanted to fly my drone around her head and get top-down video of her cranking the gnar. For Hazel, walking back and forth on a ridge in the wind for a photographer to get the perfect shot of the latest, greatest product is her worst nightmare, and even having to re-climb a section of rock for video was a bit of an annoyance. I actually appreciated moments like this because it made me feel a little more like a normal person who is working for their money. Hazel and I climbed so many good routes that I had blisters on my fingers. Then we headed up to Sydney, where we met up with another British climber, Andy Kirkpatrick, who gives the funniest slideshow presentation I've ever seen. For him, part of being a pro is tackling more than a hundred speaking engagements a year!

I then rushed from Australia to Banff where "Sufferfest 2" was premiering. During a layover, I got an absolutely bizarre phone call from one of my sponsors, Clif Bar, who informed me that, effective immediately, anyone who free solos, BASE jumps, or slacklines was off the team. While I knew that this was most likely an anomaly in our community, it definitely had me wondering how solid the professional ground that I was standing on was. I got calls from *The New York Times* and *Men's Journal* asking for comments. Maybe being too extreme for Clif Bar was actually good for my climbing career?

I arrived in Banff questioning my existence as usual, but excited to see my work screened in front of more than a thousand people. With a highly scientific device called a "clap-o-meter," my film was deemed to have received the biggest and loudest applause, winning the People's Choice Award that evening. My first award as a filmmaker! I took my hardware back to Boulder for a short respite before another speaking engagement in Toronto, where one too many whiskeys enabled me to give the loosest (and probably best) slideshow I've ever done.

Some folks think I'm living the dream, but making your living off something as nebulous as professional climbing is stressful. A blown tendon or a couple seasons without a breakout ascent can and has ended careers. For myself, I've tried to let my passion for climbing and my love for entertaining and telling tall tales (which in the end have more longevity than I ever will) be my guide, but I'm still in a constant state of hustle, trying to keep the sponsors stoked, trying to get after my own climbing dreams, and all the time knowing that nothing is certain in this lifestyle. There will be times when you question whether it's worth the insecurity and trouble, but if you work hard and put your heart and soul into your work, you just might inspire and entertain some people. And the whirlwind of my weird profession goes on, hopefully for many years to come.

As I write this, I'm on a plane to Los Angeles to film a pilot for a television series. When that's done, I'll be off to Raleigh, North Carolina; Washington, D.C.; and New York City for speaking engagements. These days when someone asks me, "What do you do?" I give him or her the most honest answer to this complicated question that I can: "Just living the dream, you know. Doing what it takes to get by."

Cedar Wright is a contributing editor for Climbing. *His expense accounts are lavish, so next time you see him, beers are on him.*

BY BRENDAN LEONARD

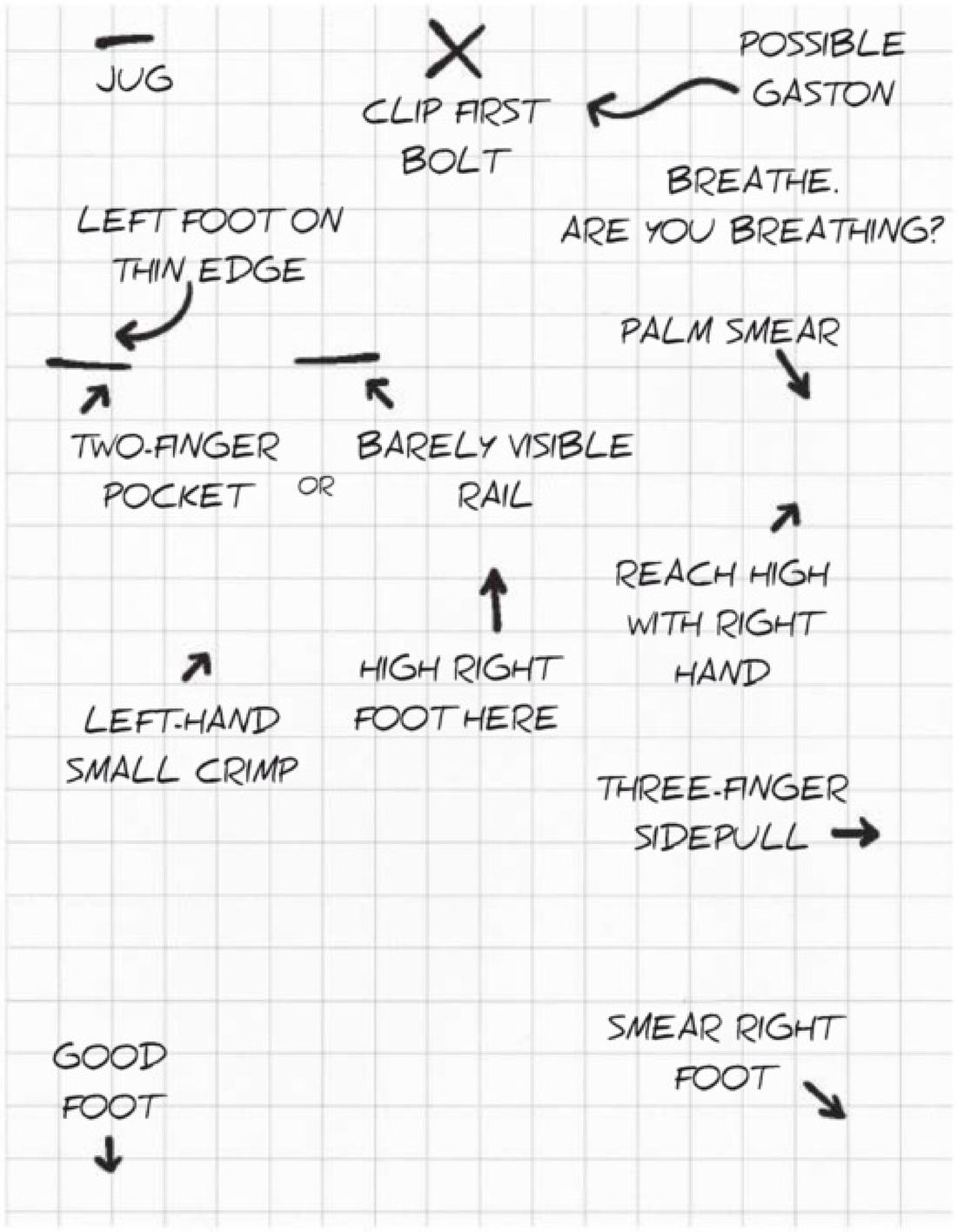
Do You Want Some Beta?

OK, IF YOU STEP UP on that right foot, then reach up with the left hand, there's a good side-pull. Feel it? No, it's up higher. A little higher. Your hand should be on it. OK, yeah, it's not that great, you're right. You can get a full pad of all your fingers on it, can't you? OK, no, you're right, maybe three of them. Not full pads, just tips. Anyway, it's good. I mean, it's pretty good. Yeah, so pull on that, transfer your weight to your right foot, and just over that little mini-roof on your right is a crimp. You really have to stretch for it, but it's up there. That's it.

Do you like beta? Some people do; some people don't. How much beta do you like? Do you want move-by-move instructions on how to send a 60-foot sport route? Would you prefer I just tell you where the key hand jam is at the crux as I belay you from above? Or would you like no beta whatsoever, so you can claim the true onsight?

Hold on. Did you read the guidebook entry, which noted a key hold right after the fourth bolt? Is that beta? Did you look up the climb on Mountain Project and find out that the crux move would be easy for you because the 30th commenter said it was a piece of cake if you're 5'11" or taller? Does that count as beta? How many photos of the route have you seen? One? Twenty? Should we blindfold you on the approach to the crag and only remove it when you have your feet on the starting footholds?

How many people do you prefer to get beta from? One crusty guidebook author who last climbed the route 20 years before the book was published and forgot most of it, so he just wrote some vague info? Maybe just a verbal description from one person at the crag who just climbed it and says nothing besides that it's "a little reachy"? Or would you like all of your friends to stand around at the bottom of the climb and yell different things at you as you search around for the one goddamn handhold they said was the key to the whole climb?



What type of beta do you need to send today? Just that one vague guidebook entry from the crusty guy? Or that guidebook plus the description from the Mountain Project app? Or how about the guidebook, plus Mountain Project, plus all the comments on Mountain Project, whether they're relevant or not, plus all the photos? Would you like to watch a video of someone climbing it first? Would you like to watch someone climb it first in person? Would you like someone to put tick marks on all the good fingerlocks, or the hard-to-spot footholds, before you go for it? Or would you prefer to share a photo on an Internet forum and crowdsource beta from anyone who is willing to help and possibly indicate the beta with some basic Photoshop work?

How much beta is too much? Are you getting soft? Are we getting soft? You know, Fred Beckey went back there and put up that route when there wasn't even a road—they walked 17 miles. Not to mention the lack of a trail to the base, knowledge of a descent route, or anything about a possible line to the top. You think he had beta? Hell no, he didn't. Is it too much beta if you read his guidebook? Is it too much beta if you follow chalk? How about those little dog tags they have at some crags, denoting which route is which, or the small painted signs in Europe? How about bolts? They're pretty much a dead giveaway where the route goes, after all. What about a signed approach trail, or non-confusing driving directions to the crag from the closest major city? Too much beta? Look, I'm happy to help; I just need to know what you like. //

Brendan Leonard is a contributing editor for Climbing. *He lives for the relentless pursuit of 5.fun and writes at* **semi-rad.com**.



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BY DOUGALD MACDONALD

ELIAS HOLZKNECHT


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Round 2

Adam Ondra got the second ascent of one of Spain's most famous sport routes: *First Round, First Minute.* After more than 50 attempts, Chris Sharma first climbed the route in 2011, without grading it. Ondra's verdict: 9b (5.15b).

El Sendero Luminoso

On the limestone walls of El Potrero Chico, Mexico, Alex Honnold soloed the 1,750-foot *El Sendero Luminoso*, with at least seven 5.12 pitches. Put up in 1994, the route originally was rated 5.12d, but Honnold said it felt more like 5.12b/c and more techy than pumpy, so he could take his time—he spent about two hours on the wall. He had done the route once years earlier and then rehearsed and cleaned it over several days before the solo. "I know I'm ready [for a free solo] when it seems exciting and fun as opposed to hard and scary," he told Planet Mountain. "The prepping process is what transforms it from scary to awesome."



FREDRIK MARMSATER (2); CEDAR WRIGHT (LOWER)



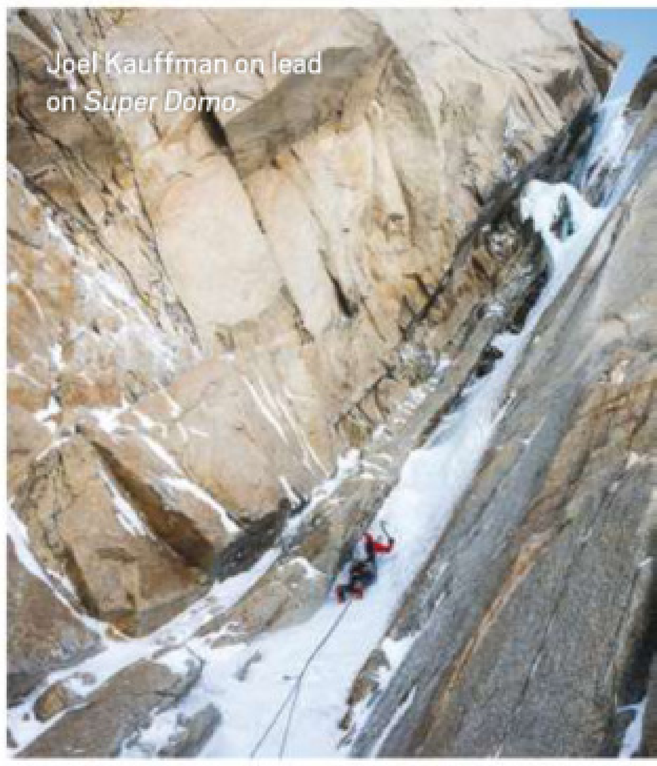
Honnold airs it out on *El Sendero Luminoso.*

Cold As Ice

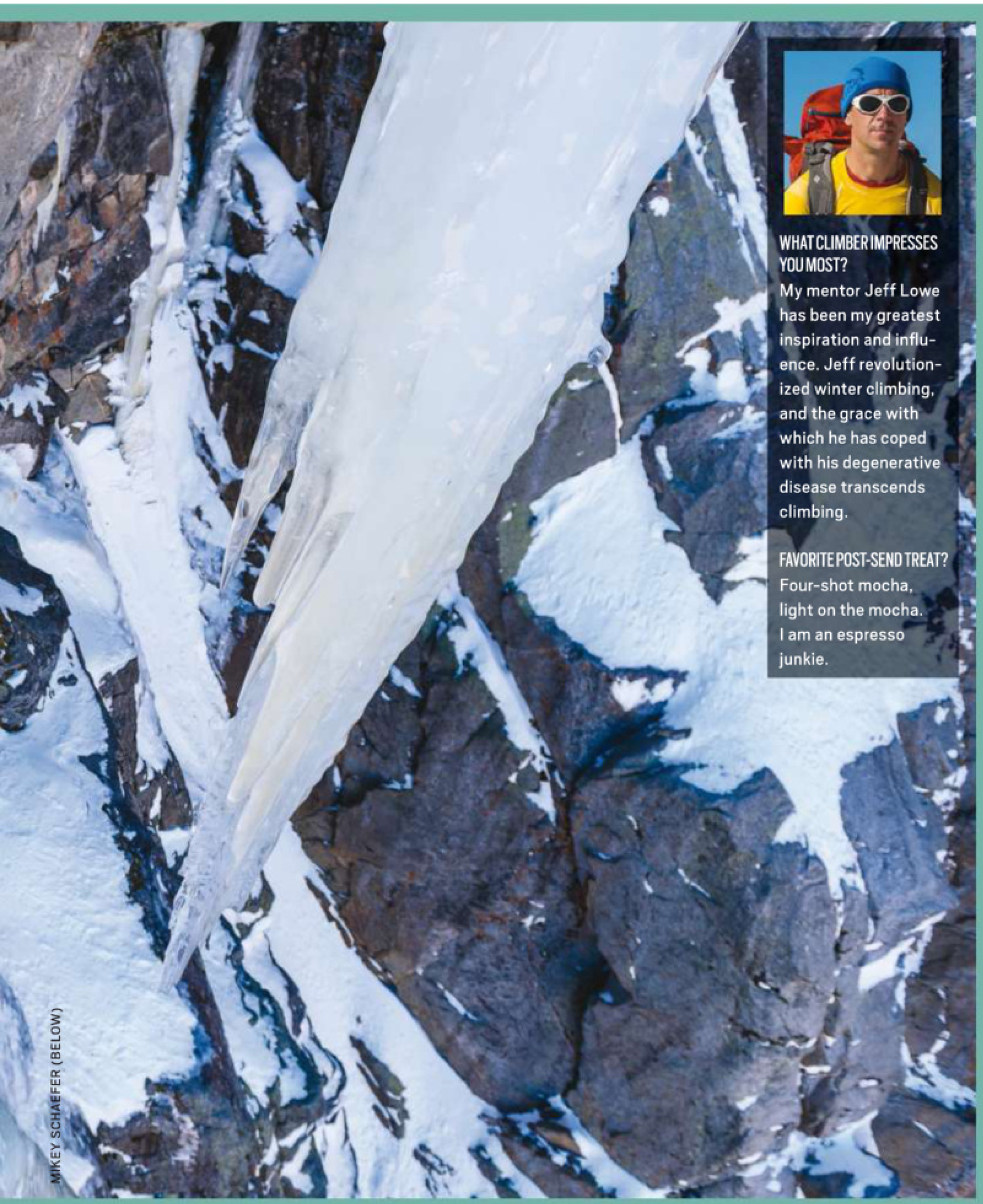
An English-Norwegian team led by Andy Kirkpatrick climbed the 27-pitch South Ridge of Ulvetanna in Antarctica, a big wall leading to a long alpine ridge. Three previous attempts at the first ascent had failed.

INSTANT CLASSIC

Mikey Schaefer and brothers Joel and Neil Kauffman discovered a long, relatively moderate ice line protected from high winds on the east face of Patagonia's Cerro Domo Blanco. Their new route, *Super Domo*—named for a flavor at an ice cream shop in nearby El Chaltén—was repeated five times in a single day soon afterward.



Joel Kauffman on lead on *Super Domo.*



MIKEY SCHAEFER (BELOW)

WHAT CLIMBER IMPRESSES YOU MOST?
My mentor Jeff Lowe has been my greatest inspiration and influence. Jeff revolutionized winter climbing, and the grace with which he has coped with his degenerative disease transcends climbing.

FAVORITE POST-SEND TREAT?
Four-shot mocha, light on the mocha. I am an espresso junkie.

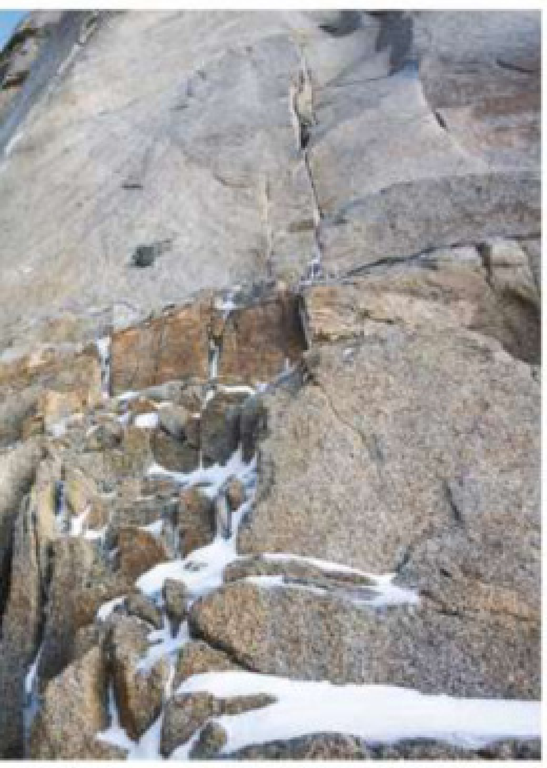
Forty-two-year-old Will Mayo has long been making headlines for his high-end ice and mixed routes, first in the Adirondacks of New York and more recently in Colorado, where he moved in 2009. But no matter what style you consider—sport, trad, alpine, or comp—2014 was an exceptional year.

Mayo was one of only three competitors—and the sole American—to flash the comp route at the Ouray Ice Festival. In February, he redpointed *The Mustang*, the hardest of four desperate dry-tooling routes he established behind *The Fang* at East Vail, Colorado. At M14-, with a 30-meter horizontal roof traverse, *The Mustang* is now one of America's hardest sport-mixed routes.

In May, Josh Wharton and Mayo flew to Alaska with Mayo at the controls of his single-engine private plane. Leaving Colorado just after midnight, they were in Talkeetna 19 hours later. The very next day they were dropped off on the glacier below Mt. Huntington, and the day after that they climbed a new ice route up the West Face, *Scorched Earth* (AI6 M7), in less than 12 hours to the summit.

Mayo made a trip to Switzerland in March with Ben Collett and onsighted the traditionally protected M10 route *The Flying Circus*. When early-season ice appeared in the mountains of Colorado in October, he and Collett climbed two very hard new routes on the Black Wall, near Mt. Evans, with overhanging rock and thin WI6/7 ice, all above 13,000 feet.

This summer he's raising his ambition even higher, planning an expedition to an unclimbed wall in the Karakoram, with his Colorado ice buddies Wharton and Stanislav Vrba.



The Fitz Traverse

Tommy Caldwell and Alex Honnold got lucky with the weather and then put in a superhuman effort to complete a five-day, five-kilometer traverse of Fitz Roy and its six satellite peaks. Honnold downplayed the effort as an "extremely scenic backpacking trip," though it involved about 13,000 vertical feet of climbing, up to 5.11d, with icy rock.

Rusty Piton

Descending from a successful climb of Fitz Roy in Patagonia, 42-year-old Chad Kellogg, the well-known mountaineer, speed climber, and cancer survivor from Seattle, was killed by a falling rock. Later in the month, in Punta Arenas, Chile, the big wall pioneer Charlie Porter, known for solo ascents in Yosemite, Alaska, and Baffin Island, died at age 63.

Big Spray

Will Gadd added another long testpiece to the "spray ice" plastered to the cave behind Helmcken Falls in Canada. *Overhead Hazard* (M13+, 200 meters, 6 or 7 pitches) required more than two weeks of work to establish, with help from John Freeman, Sarah Hueniken, and Katie Bono.

Pure Joy

Since 2008, when Italian Christian Core completed the boulder problem *Gioia* at Varazze, the route had been repeated only once. Adam Ondra spent 11 days on the boulder in late 2011 and gave it 8c+ (V16). In early 2014, Finland's Nalle Hukkataival snagged the third ascent, saying the problem was highly conditions-dependent and might be 8c, might be 8c+.

The Hard Way

Maine climber Sean O'Neill, 48, who is paralyzed from the waist down, ascended Telluride's *Bridal Veil Falls* (WI5+, 3 pitches) with Andres Marin, along with help from brother Timmy O'Neill and others.

INTO THE LIGHT

Chris Sharma and German superstar Stefan Glowacz teamed up for a Red Bull–backed climb in Oman, developing and then redpointing a 13-pitch 5.14a route—entirely underground. The climb, accessed by a 500-foot-plus rappel (with special permission from the Omani government), ascends the ceiling of one of the world's largest caverns: Majlis al Jinn.



The El Capitan–size west face of Pyramid Peak, showing the French first ascent (red) and a Canadian attempt (yellow).

Rusty Piton

Sean "Stanley" Leary, featured in last year's Golden Pitons for a new route in Antarctica, was one of America's great adventure climbers and BASE jumpers, with numerous first ascents and speed records. At age 38, he died in a BASE jumping accident in Zion National Park.

Euro-Tour

The Matterhorn has four major ridges leading to the summit, in two countries, and Italian Hervé Barmasse enchained all four—climbing up two of them and down two others—during a solo 17-hour day.

Oregon Ice

A major new alpine route is a rarity for Oregon, but Steve Elder and Tyler Adams found *Brainless Child* (WI5+ 5.9 X), 1,600 feet with "steep mush," on the east face of Mt. Thielsen, a 9,183-foot volcano.

Rusty Piton

A serac avalanche plunged into the Khumbu Icefall near the start of the climbing season on Mt. Everest, killing 16 Nepali high-altitude workers. The worst single-day disaster in Everest history effectively shut down the south side of the mountain, as Nepalis declined to keep working on the route out of respect for the victims. All of the expeditions evacuated basecamp. However, one month later a Chinese woman summited the peak with her Sherpa guides after helicoptering to Camp 2, above the Khumbu Icefall. A one-off example of cheating the mountain or a sign of things to come?

Revelations

Three separate teams—from the U.S., Canada, and France—climbed new routes in Alaska's Revelation Mountains. The highlight? The French climbers' first ascent of Pyramid Peak by an 1,100-meter rock and ice route taking four days.

KLAUS FENGLER / RED BULL CONTENT POOL (TOP); IAN WELSTED

In general, putting up high-end sport routes takes more effort and time than climbing new boulder problems of similar difficulty—there's more cleaning, bolting, sequences to learn, more of everything. Not surprisingly, few elite sport climbers focus on new routes. However, one climber who thrives on the "blue collar" work of route development is Joe Kinder, and after a rough 2013, Kinder enjoyed a brilliant year of climbing and new-routing in 2014.

Last winter the 34-year-old redpointed his hardest new route yet: *Maquina Muerte* (5.14d) in the Cathedral Cave in southern Utah. The climb took Kinder two years to complete and taught him a new level of "patience and follow-through.... I hope to apply that to future projects and my hopes of sending my next level: 9a+ [5.15a]."

Kinder experienced follow-through of another sort at the Cascade Cliff (aka Zebra Wall or Tiger Wall) near South Lake Tahoe, California. In late 2013, he cut down two juniper trees to make a safer start to a climb and touched off a firestorm of criticism—not least because he's such a high-profile, sponsored athlete. Kinder apologized publicly, paid a fine to the Forest Service, and made large donations to conservation groups. After months away, he returned to the crag several times to find some personal closure, eventually completing a trio of new 5.14 routes, including *Weekend at Bernie's*, which he calls the best first ascent he's ever done. "The view from the cliff, the texture of the rock, the color, moves, and style were all my idea of a perfect line," he said. "If you add all of the emotion that coincided with that cliff and the things I've learned from it all, it became a huge and monumental experience.

"I'm very fortunate to be in the position I am as a pro climber, having lots of free time to climb and do exactly what I want to do," Kinder added. "But at the same time I have a little guilt or fire under my ass, and I hate the idea of just going climbing for myself. Putting up routes allows me to feel perhaps a little less selfish and to give something back for the enjoyment of other climbers."

GOLDEN PITON AWARD

JOE KINDER

SPORT



FAVORITE POST-SEND TREAT?
Mexican food and margaritas.

WHAT DO YOU IMAGINE YOURSELF DOING WHEN YOU'RE 50?
Climbing, of course! Probably a little more interested in the adventure side of things.

CAMERON MAIER (2)

GOLDEN PITON AWARD

KEVIN COOPER AND RYAN JENNINGS

ALPINE

Coloradans Kevin Cooper, 48, and Ryan Jennings, 41, both have full-time jobs. Each has two kids. They're about as far from full-time climbers as you can get. But here's the thing about alpinism: Experience counts. A lot.

Cooper and Jennings have been climbing together for more than 17 years, and they first targeted the 4,000-foot north face of Mt. Johnson, above Alaska's Ruth Gorge, in 2003. However, while descending from a warm-up climb on the Moose's Tooth, a rappel anchor failed, and they tumbled 1,000 feet to the glacier, both with injuries and lucky to be alive. Both feel that few climbs justify extended time away from families—and serious risk—but returning to Mt. Johnson was one.

When they reached the foot of Mt. Johnson in 2014, a line of thin ice ran down the left center of the wall. They spent two days finding a way past the huge roofline near the bottom, and then fixed two ropes for their final push. Thin, sticky névé coating the face was not too strenuous to climb but nearly impossible to protect. The two simul-climbed in "pitches" up to 700 feet long, with essentially no pro, relying on nerves and skill. They reached a bivy ledge just as the sun began to rise.

The next "day" lasted 40 hours, with only a two-hour nap in the middle. Above their rest ledge, the névé began melting away as they climbed—just a day later and it would have been gone. The two persevered to the summit, completing the climb of their lives.





WHAT MAKES YOUR PARTNERSHIP WORK?
Jennings (top): Trust. Cooper: Respect.

WHERE DO YOU DREAM OF GOING NEXT?
Both men: Patagonia.

RYAN JENNINGS (3)

Rusty Piton

Six climbers, including guides Eitan Green and Matt Hegeman, fell to their deaths from Liberty Ridge on Mt. Rainier. An avalanche is believed to have swept the team from the route somewhere above 12,800 feet.

No Poles, No Problem

Russian climbers Alexander Gukov and Alexey Lonchinski ticked the first ascent of the southwest face of Nepal's Thamserku (21,713 feet). They spent seven nights in a tent with no poles.

Beginner's Route?

Mike Libecki climbed a 17-pitch new route, *New Dog, Old Tricks*, in the ice-bound eastern fjords of Baffin Island. Impressively, his Swedish climbing partner, Jonas Haag, had never done a big wall.

El Cap Solo

Coloradan Jes Meiris soloed the *Nose* on El Capitan in about 27 hours, 20 minutes, the first female single-push solo of Yosemite's most famous climb. Five months later, Chantel Astorga lowered the women's solo mark on the same route to 24:39.

Just Did It

Paige Claassen, queen of tiny holds, became the first woman to redpoint *Just Do It* (5.14c), one of the historic sport routes at Smith Rock, Oregon.

Denali Blitz

Kilian Jornet, winner of last year's Golden Piton for speed climbing after his record-setting alpine climbs, raced up and down 20,237-foot Denali's West Buttress route (with the Rescue Gully cutoff) in just 11 hours, 48 minutes. That's nearly five hours quicker than the previous fastest known time for the 33-mile round-trip. Next up? Aconcagua, the highest peak in the Western Hemisphere.

7 In 7

David Allfrey and Alex Honnold climbed seven different full-length El Capitan routes in seven days—137 guidebook pitches in all. During this mega-endurance challenge, they set new speed records on four routes: *New Jersey Turnpike*, *Tangerine Trip*, *Eagle's Way*, and *Triple Direct*. "We went to bed as early as we could each night, but, even still, the body was only recovering a little bit," Allfrey said.

All-Arounder

Finnish climber Nalle Hukkataival repeated the Austrian alpine-rock testpiece *Silbergeier* (5.13d/14a, 6 pitches), with Tomi Nytorp. A few weeks earlier, on the first of May, Hukkataival did the sit start to *Bügeleisen* (originally V14), also in Austria. Hukkataival said it was the hardest boulder he'd ever climbed. And that was in the same year he repeated *Gioia*, a possible V16 (see p. 59).

New Level

Jonathan Siegrist climbed his first 5.15, and it was a doozy: *Biographie*, at Ceüse, France, considered the world's first consensus 9a+.



Jonathan Siegrist digs deep on the world's first 5.15.



WHERE WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO CLIMB?
The Karakoram. Such gorgeous granite!

FAVORITE POST-SEND TREAT?
Cheddar popcorn.

GOLDEN PITON AWARD

LIBBY SAUTER

BREAKTHROUGH PERFORMANCE

"I wouldn't say this year has been out of the ordinary, except that some of my exploits have caught a bit of media attention," said Libby Sauter. True, the 30-year-old isn't cranking V13 or freeing El Cap, but she was the common thread among some of 2014's most impressive big wall ascents, with a variety of partners. Hence the attention.

In February, Sauter, Althea Rogers, and Niels Tietze traveled to Chile to complete the first ascent of *Cenizas a Cenizas* (5.10 R A3), a 4,000-foot granite prow that looks like the *Nose* except it's 15 miles up a previously unexplored valley in northern Patagonia. This past fall, Sauter climbed the *Nose* and *Lurking Fear* on El Capitan in a single day with Quinn Brett—a first for two women. Then, with Mayan Smith-Gobat, she set a new women's speed record for the *Nose*: 4 hours, 43 minutes. "I also climbed my first 5.13 route, but that really isn't noteworthy, except to me!" she said.

"My success on larger objectives, despite being a mediocre hard climber, probably can be attributed to two main things: good overall big-day fitness and, more importantly, a degree of comfort with certain risks," Sauter said. "When climbing with Mayan on the *Nose*, I led the first 16 pitches on just one double rack, never stopping to get gear back and primarily only clipping fixed gear for pro. I have to be comfortable with big run-outs and simul-climbing."

Sauter earned her big wall skills working for the YOSAR team between 2009 and 2011. "The strength and depth of skills of all the women around was—and is—the most impressive and influential force for me," she said. "Women like Lorna Illingworth, Althea Rogers, and Chantel Astorga really helped motivate me and expand my perception of what was possible." Now, Sauter works as a pediatric heart nurse for an international agency, helping to set up surgical programs in developing countries—this winter she was working in Kyrgyzstan. "I get two- to five-week assignments, then have a nice chunk of time off for trips," she said. "It's the perfect climber schedule."

CAMERON MAIER (TOP); 3 STRINGS PRODUCTIONS (INSET); JAMES LUCAS (RIGHT)

GOLDEN PITON AWARD

ALEX PUCCIO

BOULDERING

Alex Puccio is the eight-time national champion in bouldering, and the only American—male or female—ever to stand on the podium for a full World Cup bouldering season. (She finished third in 2011 and 2013.) It was obvious she was a beast. But was she just a gym rat? Before her 2014 sendfest, Puccio had done numerous V12 problems outdoors, but nothing harder. In July, the 25-year-old sent her first two V13s, both in Rocky Mountain National Park, near her home in Boulder, Colorado. (The first, *Top Notch*, was a first female ascent.) Then, on August 3, on her fourth day of attempts, Puccio sent *Jade* (V14), becoming the fourth woman to reach this level.

Her outdoor success stemmed from a relatively lackluster 2014 World Cup circuit: She finished sixth overall. "I felt a lot of pressure because I wasn't performing the way I expected to," she said. "So I decided to skip the last two World Cups and just climb outside with no expectations. This allowed me to perform better, and I surprised myself." Puccio went back to Europe buoyed by her summer sends and won a dramatic silver medal at the Boulder World Championships in Munich. A week later, the American won the annual Arco invitational comp in Italy. But she wasn't done. Back in Colorado, she sent *Wheel of Chaos* in Rocky Mountain National Park, becoming the first woman ever with two V14s on her tick list.



WHERE WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO CLIMB?
Rocklands, South Africa. It looks like my style, and my favorite rock is sandstone.

FAVORITE POST-SEND TREAT?
Chocolate cake with a lot of icing. Works well as a pre-sending treat, too!

JOEL ZERR (2)

Mega Megos

Alex Megos, 21, winner of last year's Golden Piton for breakthrough performance, hasn't slowed down one bit. Among many other impressive sends: a one-day repeat of *Biographie* (5.15a) at Ceüse, France, and the first free ascent of a 20-pitch 5.14b in Switzerland.

G-V

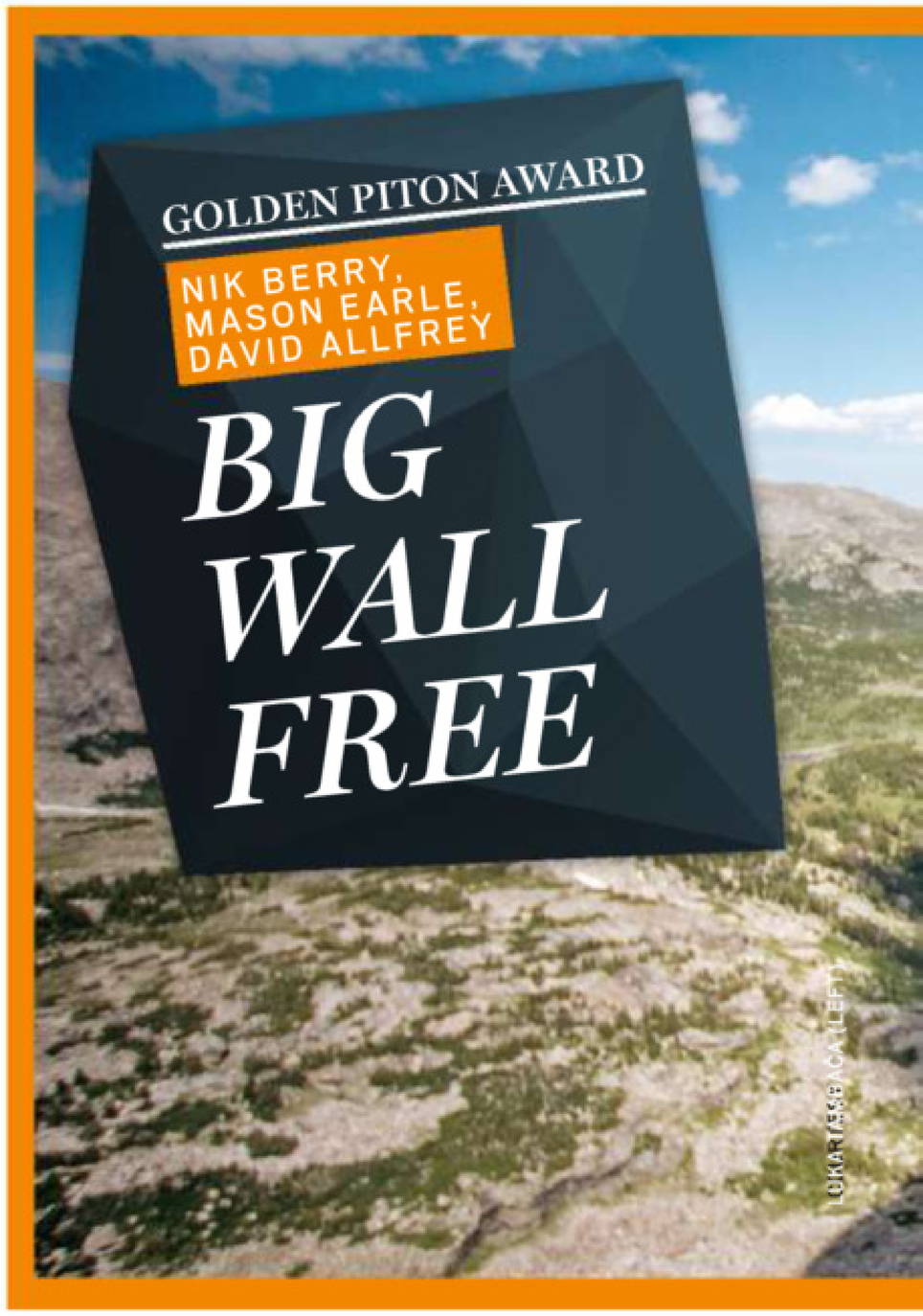
A Korean trio finally found a way to the top of Gasherbrum V, an unclimbed 23,448-foot peak in the Karakoram that had been attempted many times.



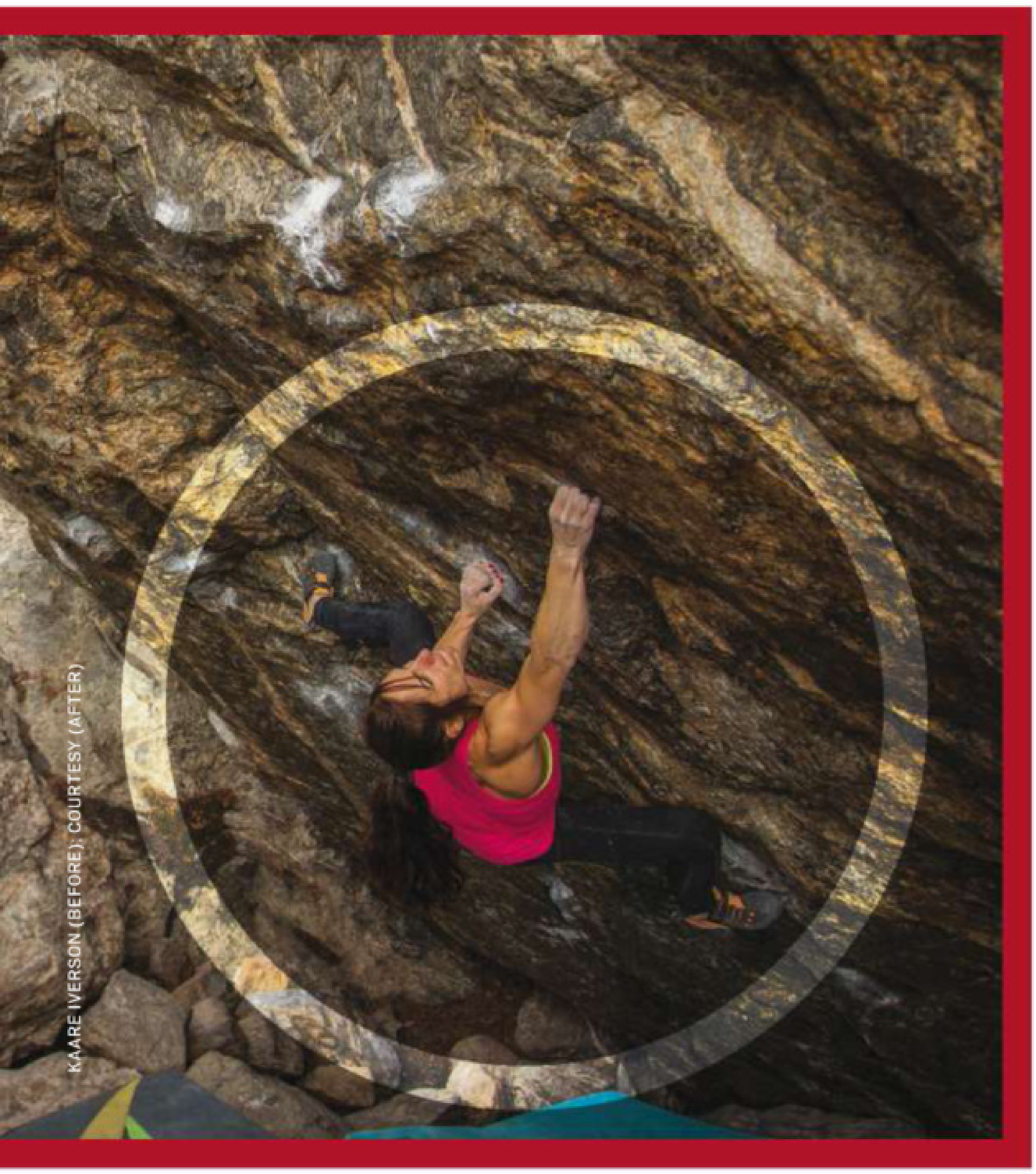
Briton Shauna Coxsey on her send of *New Base Line*.

WOMEN OF POWER

2014 was a wonderful year for female boulderers, with three women ticking their first 8b+ (V14) boulder problems. (Until this year, only one woman had done it: Tomoko Ogawa, winner of a Golden Piton in 2012.) Ashima Shiraishi, just 13 years old, was the second to climb V14, sending *Golden Shadow* in Rocklands, South Africa. Then came Shauna Coxsey from Great Britain, who did *New Base Line* in Magic Wood, Switzerland. Finally, Alex Puccio sent not one, but two V14 problems in Rocky Mountain National Park. For more on Alex, see above.



LOWRY/SCA (LEFT)



KAARE IVERSON (BEFORE); COURTESY (AFTER)

Yes, Sir!

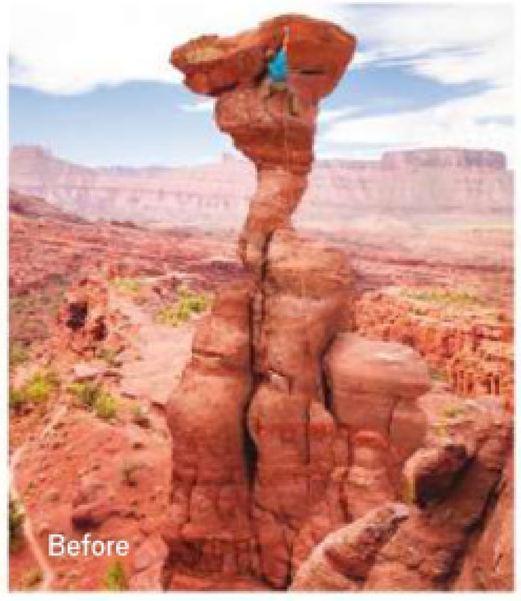
Sir Christian Bonington, famed Himalayan mountaineer, climbed the Old Man of Hoy, the four-pitch 5.10 tower off the coast of Scotland, at age 80.

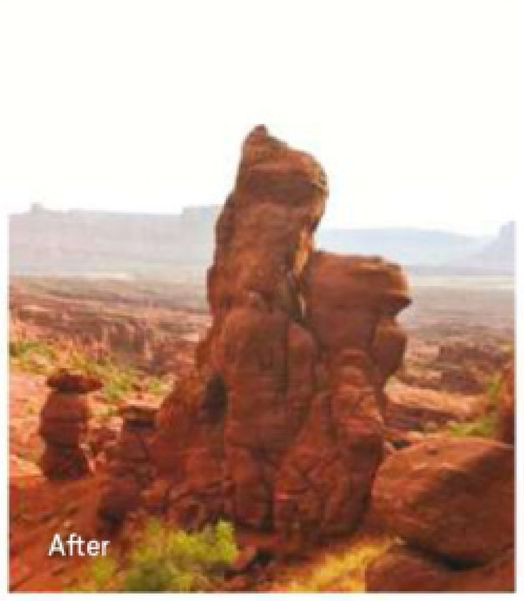
Triple Threat

Marc-Andre Leclerc soloed three routes in 12 hours on the huge east face of Slesse Mountain in British Columbia. Each of the 5.9+ to 5.10+ climbs involved 20 to 28 guidebook pitches. His mantra on the face: "I feel like a cat; I feel like a ninja! I feel like a ninja cat! An alpine ninja cat!"

Rusty Piton

Though no taller than many gym routes, the Cobra was a much-loved and photographed pinnacle in the Fisher Towers of Utah. Climbing this twisted column of conglomerate, with a 5.11 pull onto the tilted pancake of sandstone balanced on top, was terrifying. And for good reason: After a period of heavy rain, the tower collapsed—fortunately with no one on it.







SPARKSHOP / KYLE BERKOMPAS

These three twenty-somethings could have called it good in 2013. David Allfrey, Nik Berry, and Mason Earle had pieced together a new free line on the north face of Mt. Hooker, the remote 1,800-foot wall in Wyoming's Wind River Range. Their free link-up of *Sendero Luminoso*, *Shady Lady*, and some new ground had created Wyoming's hardest alpine rock route.

But they weren't satisfied. After seven pitches, the three had escaped to the right below the headwall of *Sendero*, a route they described as the "perfect line." So in August they made the 15-mile trek back into Hooker, hiring horses to guarantee they had enough supplies—or at least a sustained sugar buzz. "We had a lot of food," Allfrey said. "It's not every expedition that you can just mow into the 10-pound bag of peanut M&M's with reckless abandon at 7 a.m., just because you want to."

The trio set to work on the straight-up line. "We were optimistic about completing the route, but there were definitely still question marks," Earle said. The next pitch after their 2013 high point was a "proper, hard A4 lead." But the wall to the left of the aid seam appeared to be well-featured, and after some work (including placing some protection bolts), pitches eight and nine went at 5.13a and 5.12d. In all, the 13-pitch wall has seven pitches of 5.12 and 5.13, with a 5.13+ crux—likely the hardest wilderness big wall free climb in the United States. Before leaving, Berry completed a one-day, all-free ascent, leading most of the hard pitches.

The Czech Republic's strongest 147-pound man has already won three Golden Pitons for sport climbing—four if you count last year's piton for *La Dura Dura*, the 5.15c route that Ondra redpointed first. But compared to many top European climbers, he'd only dabbled in competitions. In 2014 he set out to change that, dedicating most of his year to training specifically for the pressure-cooker, put-it-all-on-the-line forum of international comps.

The 22-year-old also had decided to begin university studies, and training for comps was a good fit. "Traveling around and climbing badass rock is amazing, but you might lose focus after a while, because it might get almost too relaxing," Ondra said. "I wanted to experience a very organized and structured way of life."

Ondra began the "toughest training regime" he had ever done. For the first time he worked with a climbing coach: 2009 lead world champion Patxi Usobiaga from Spain. On the months-long World Cup circuit, Ondra's results were inconsistent: a few wins, but also events where he didn't even make semifinals. But Ondra's primary goal—and the focus of all his training—was the lead climbing world championship. It surprised even him when he narrowly won the bouldering world championship in August. Then, at the lead climbing contest a few weeks later, Ondra took the prize he'd hoped for—the first time anyone has won both the bouldering and lead world championships in the same year.



WHICH COMP CLIMBER DO YOU ADMIRE THE MOST?
The superiority of Jain Kim [the Korean ranked No. 1 among female lead climbers] is mind-blowing!

WHAT'S YOUR PLAN FOR 2015?
I have no idea yet. Wherever my heart will bring me, I will go.

GOLDEN PITON AWARD

ADAM ONDRA

COMPETITION

ELIAS HOLZKNECHT (2)



EDGE OF TIME

Two pairs of Colorado climbers—Scott Bennett (pictured)/Brad Gobright and Stefan Griebel/Jason Wells—traded speed records for the *Naked Edge*, the ultra-classic 5.11 multi-pitch in Eldorado Canyon. In early October, Bennett and Gobright were first to go under 25 minutes for the round-trip from the canyon floor. Wait 'til next year.

ALTON RICHARDSON (TOP); CHRISTIAN PONDELLA / RED BULL CONTENT POOL



Locos

Sasha DiGiulian (left) and the Spanish climber Edu Marin swung leads on an all-free ascent of *Viaje de los Locos*, a 1,000-foot 5.14a on the Italian island of Sardinia.

Family Time

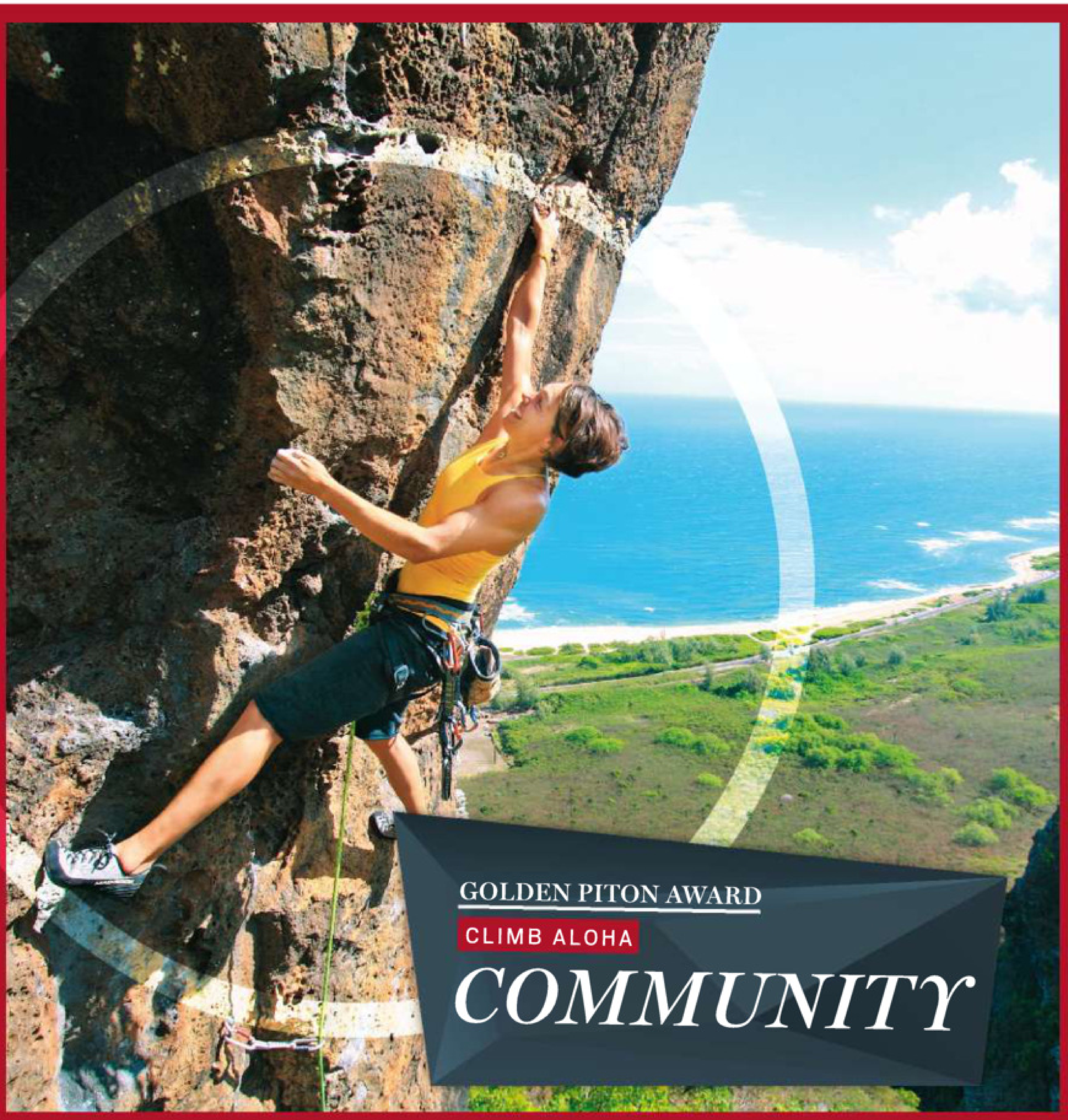
Sonnie Trotter red-pointed his hardest crack climb, *Family Man* (5.14b), at Skaha Bluffs, British Columbia, placing gear on the lead.

Still Got It

Forty-nine-year-old Marko Prezelj and his young Slovenian teammates completed the coveted first ascent of the north face of Hagshu, a 21,841-foot Eiger lookalike in India. Meanwhile, Britons Mick Fowler and Paul Ramsden (2003 Golden Piton winners) were kept off Hagshu's north face by a permit snafu and had to settle for a new route on the northeast face.

Freerider

England's Pete Whittaker more or less flashed *Freerider* (5.12d, 32 pitches) on El Capitan. The only flaw: He fell attempting the Huber Variation on pitch 23, but then flashed the Teflon Corner version of the same pitch.



GOLDEN PITON AWARD

CLIMB ALOHA

COMMUNITY

In June 2012, after a serious injury at one of Oahu's main cliffs, state officials banned climbing at the three most popular crags in the Hawaiian islands: Mokuleia, Makapuu, and the Jungle. A coalition led by Mike Richardson and fellow staffers of the Climb Aloha shop and guide service began a campaign to reopen the crags. Climb Aloha already had a deep background in climbing stewardship because of the tropical marine environment of Oahu's columnar basalt cliffs, which require titanium anchors and diligent route maintenance.

After extensive work with state legislators—in partnership with hikers, paragliders, and other outdoor groups—it seemed climbers were close to winning support for a law that would give greater liability protection to the state. But many of these protections were stripped from the bill in April 2014 by a powerful legislator. Undaunted, Climb Aloha began negotiations with state agencies on agreements to post warning signs at the cliffs, update and maintain bolts, and conduct regular safety inspections. The cliffs were expected to reopen under the new guidelines by early January.

"This has really and truly been a group effort," Richardson said. "Two colleagues in particular, Debbie Halbert and Michael Bishop, worked as many hours as I did on this, and there was massive support from the Access Fund. Even with those folks, we wouldn't have accomplished much without support from hundreds of helpful and patient community members, along with industry friends and climbers from the U.S. mainland and abroad."

Erik Murdock, policy director of the Access Fund, said, "Climb Aloha made the right connections, stayed positive, attended countless meetings and hearings, and handled failure gracefully during the past two years. They are stand-up folks who love climbing, and through successful advocacy efforts achieved the improbable."

Nose Free

Dutch climber Jorg Verhoeven completed a three-day, all-free ascent of the *Nose* of El Capitan, leading every pitch (see p. 10). Verhoeven's climb was the third, fourth, or fifth free ascent of the *Nose*, depending on your personal definitions of big wall free climbing. Indisputably, he is the first non-American to free the route.

Rusty Piton

Guidebook publisher and former *Climbing* editor Dave Pegg died unexpectedly at age 47. Pegg was born in England and first came to prominence doing gritstone headpoints, and in recent years he had devoted his endless new-routing energy to the limestone of Rifle and neighboring crags in Colorado.

Free Muir

In what he described as one of his "best days of climbing ever," Alex Honnold led the entire *Muir Wall* (5.13b/c) on El Capitan, all free in 12 hours.

Ice First

The 18th annual Bozeman Ice Festival hosted the first UIAA Ice World Cup ever in the United States. Who won? We had no idea at press time—the comp hadn't happened yet.



MARTA CZAJKOWSKA (TOP LEFT); BEN HERNDON

GOLDEN PITON AWARD

YUJI HIRAYAMA

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

Sport, trad, comps, big walls, boulders—few rock climbers have excelled in so many disciplines, for so many years, as Yuji Hirayama has since he came to international prominence two decades ago. The 45-year-old Japanese climber already has won a Golden Piton, in 2003, for his all-around ability. More than a decade later, he's earned another.

Hirayama moved to France during the 1990s to compete in World Cups and was ranked No. 1 in lead climbing in 1998 and 2000, competing against such superstars as François Legrand and Cristian Brenna. But he was never interested solely in sport climbing. Hirayama started out as a trad climber in Japan, and at age 17, during his first trip to Yosemite Valley, he climbed the trad testpieces *The Phoenix* and *Cosmic Debris* (both 5.13). In 1995 he onsighted Colorado's *Sphinx Crack* (5.13b/c), placing all the gear on the lead.

Between 2002 and 2008, Hirayama and Hans Florine broke the speed record for the *Nose* on El Capitan three separate times. Onsighting an El Capitan free route was a long-held dream, and Hirayama came close on three different routes: *El Niño*, *Golden Gate*, and the *Salathé Wall*. His attempt on the *Salathé*, in 1997, was futuristic—he fell on only three of the pitches and free climbed the full route in just two days, without pre-rehearsal. Despite not achieving the onsight, Hirayama calls this his proudest ascent. Seven years later, he did the first 8c (5.14b) onsight in history: *White Zombie* in Spain.

Despite raising a family and running a business (the largest climbing gym in Japan), Hirayama is far from washed up as a climber: In recent years he's done routes ranging from runout 5.13+ trad in Wales to a 5.14d sport route at 13,000 feet in Borneo. "I really just want to climb everywhere in the world," Hirayama said. "Just enjoy the climb and meet the people and see the culture."



WHICH CLIMBERS DO YOU ADMIRE THE MOST?
I admire so many! But if I have to choose: Stefan Glowacz was my hero when I was a kid, and Chris Sharma has inspired me a lot.

DO YOUR CHILDREN CLIMB?
I have two kids, 17 and 15. Each of them has big passion for soccer or dance, but not climbing. I hope in the future I can go climbing with them somehow.

EDDIE GIANELLONI (2)

ZION

CHASING THE EPHEMERAL

A small crew of diehards uncover a once-in-a-lifetime stash of ice in Zion.

BY SCOTT ADAMSON

CAPTIONS AND PHOTOS BY ANDREW BURR

Steeper and more sustained than it looks, the 60-foot *Celestial Fraud* (WI5) is a great novelty route located above Kolob Creek. Scott Adamson and Angela Van Wiemeersch nabbed the first ascent in 2014 when an ice bulge at the bottom provided a small foot ledge and adequate screw placements for a belay, but do yourself a favor and toprope it for peace of mind.

4 a.m.! I rolled over to turn off my phone's alarm with aching muscles. Angela and I had been skiing, bushwhacking, and romping chained up in 4-low from sun up to sun down for more than two weeks so that we could swing our tools on the best ice to form in Zion in years—perhaps ever.

Angela and I were crashing on the floor of a guiding shop where we'd worked all summer. But now, there were no clients to meet and entertain, and I wasn't already sweating from the 100+ degree temps. There was no steady stream of cars heading into the national park entrance. Quaint little Springdale had become a ghost town.

It felt surreal and out of place, but it was time to transfer our half-awake, 1,000-yard stares into jittery caffeine-induced focus on the day's ice project. I stumbled over to the stove, tripping on our gear strewn all across the floor: drying clothes, half-wet ropes, tools, screws, and boots hanging from the heater vents. It looked like someone had blown open a giant bag of Skittles (thank you, outdoor industry, for such bright, colorful gear). The roar of the double-burner stove broke the peaceful dawn. The day was on, and we raced to see what we could accomplish before it was gone.

That morning we had another zombie among us. Matt had driven through the night a day earlier to get in on the action. I had told him over the phone that it was a big gamble to make the five-hour drive south. The temps were borderline for ice. It was melting out daily, though sometimes healing up at night, depending on the location. Not to mention it kept raining in Springdale. He made the mad dash anyway.

I had heard horror stories from Andrew Burr about some of the winter approaches in the east end of the park. He and a crew had made the descent to the *Zicicle* (WI5) years prior [see the cover of *Climbing*, October 2009]. They had to huff all the way in from the paved road, and he said they crawled on their knees most of the way. The inconsistent punch-hole crust didn't allow them to hike, and they didn't have skis because, well, c'mon, it's the desert.

We chained up and slowly descended the few miles to where we'd park. We felt very lucky with the snow conditions. Too much snow and you high-center. Too little snow and the clay will swallow your vehicle whole—especially on the way out when the sun softens the road. On a recon mission years earlier, I got stuck in the clay for eight hours and threw a chain, never to be found again.

The day before had been a typically long day. We had sniffed out some big ice and tagged a massive 600-foot blue ribbon down the start of a slot canyon. We scoped a hanging football field of ice for today's climb. It was such a different way of climbing. You never really knew what the bottom of the route was like or if it went. You could guess from the rim, but the distance straight down into a dark canyon is open to the imagination. Does it go? The saving grace for this style of top-down climbing was that on the way down, you got a full preview of what was to come. You could touch, feel, and kick at the soon-to-be-climbed ice.

We adopted a method of descending that would make it way more manageable to climb back out if needed. One of us would rap with double 70-meter ropes and put in a bomber anchor. If that pitch looked "leadable" (not necessarily the same as "protectable"), they would holler up for the rest of us to rap down and we'd commit to that pitch by pulling the ropes for the next rap. It was the ultimate ego test. Once we'd arrive at the bottom, the final rope pull was intimidating to say the least. OK, it was frightening as hell! It made us aware of how capable we really had to be. We couldn't lower off a screw and make the walk of shame to the car to grab a beer. Not a day went by without some wild, scary, and dangerous climbing.

At the base, we pulled ropes. Angela, Matt, and I stood there looking up at several hundred feet of clean ice. We were in a tight canyon deep in one of Zion's east drainages. The crux was now getting to that gigantic flow above us. The moves off the ground were fucking terrifying, to put it bluntly. It started with a single stubby (short ice screw) for 70 meters—this would become the pattern for most routes. It was a soloing mind game. If you blew out the ice against the rock on your first or second swing, you wouldn't get another chance. I gave out a loud "Yahoo!" once my pick sunk in deeper than three teeth. The first real piece I clipped was the anchors we had set on the way down. Angela took us to the top on perfect, blue, steep, sticky ice. We named the route *Nuclear Sunrise* after the world-class sunrise we'd watched that morning on the drive in. A brilliant column of orange shot straight into the sky from the desert horizon. It looked like a bomb had gone off in the distance.

It was hard to rate the pitches on most of the routes we climbed. Sometimes it would be overhanging ice with good gear and other times it would be less-than-vertical, thin verglas without a single imperfection or shelf, leaving you without gear for 70 to 80 meters. We decided to use the Zion PDW rating, or "pretty damn Western."

Maybe more insane than climbing these routes was trying to document and capture the magic as it happened. Burr put in the mileage—with a much heavier pack. While we were deep in a canyon dodging ice chunks, I looked up on the rim and spotted a naked Burr sunbathing and snapping away. He was just as blown away with the idea of ice climbing in such an already beautiful rock climbing mecca.

We had a lot of dead-end days, skiing and stomping through the desert without a glimpse of frozen things to climb. Not knowing what was around the next curve in the canyon or over the next edge was our virtue and also our vice. It kept us waking before dawn to hunt the extremely ephemeral ice. We knew this was our only chance to chase it down. In an 18-day rampage in February 2014, Angela Van Wiemeersch, Jesse Huey, Matt Tuttle, and I climbed more than a dozen big ice routes in the desert of southwest Utah. First ascents, all of them. Here are the best shots from the inimitable Andrew Burr.

The first pitch of *Flux Capacitor* (WI5+) involves a hanging belay set at the lowest screwable ice, roughly 40 to 50 feet above the water-filled slot canyon. Pictured here are first ascensionists Scott Adamson (climbing) and Angela Van Wiemeersch at the very start of the route.





Angela Van Wiemeersch cruises *Corn on the Kolob* (WI4), which features two 30-foot vertical curtains separated by a narrow ledge—all over a rushing creek.

One of the longer routes in the area, *Sugar and Snice and Everything Zice* is the 750-foot WI4 grandaddy. You'll need rock gear, peckers, and a fleet of screws.



Nuclear Sunrise

WI5 | 400 FEET

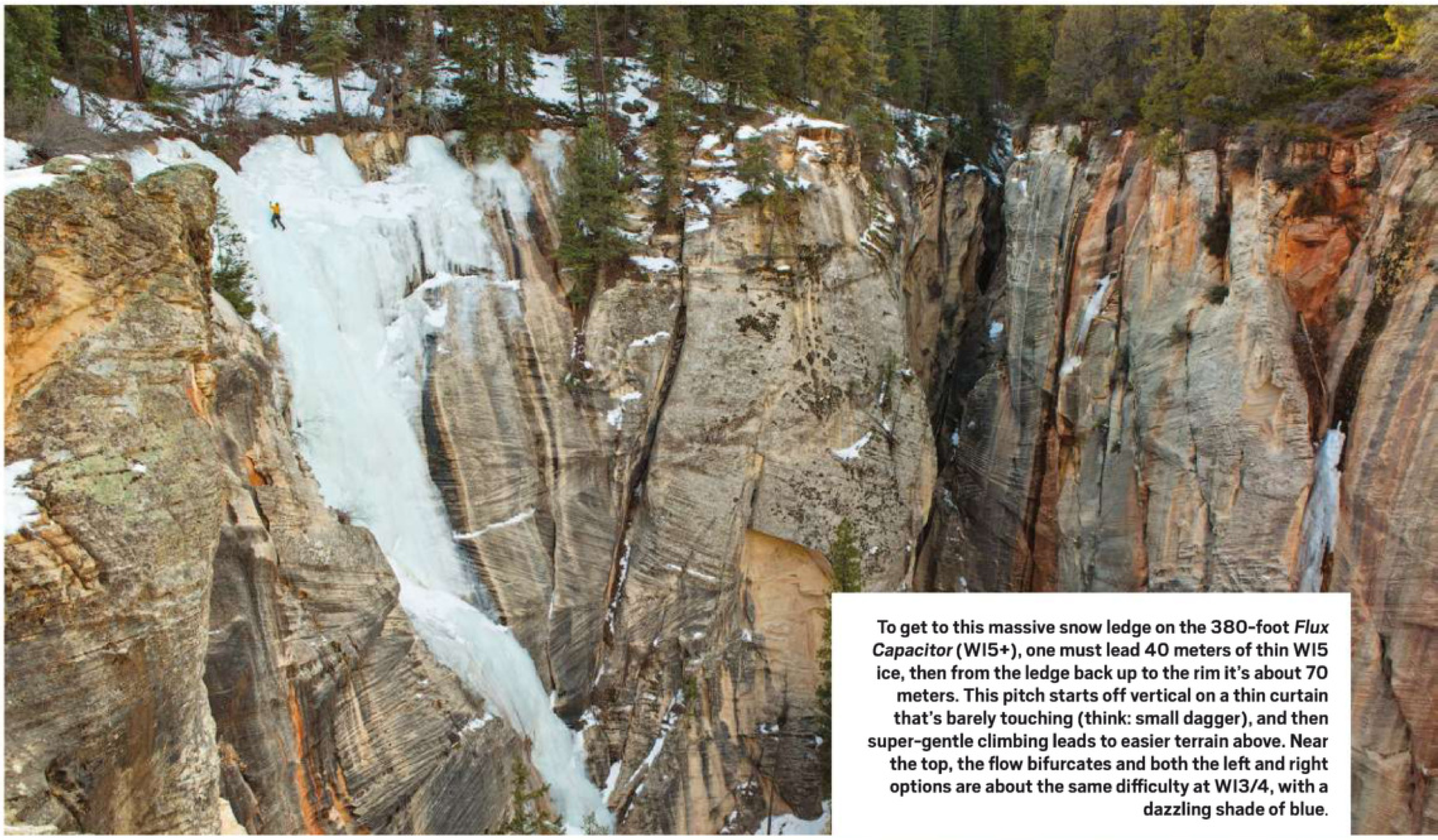
Climbing ice in Zion is anything but a casual experience. The day starts and ends in blackness, and coffee before dawn is not only common but a requirement. Drive from trailhead to trailhead with lights on, trying to get the bulk of climbing done before the sun peeks out to keep the ice frozen and hard. On this particular day, the duo from Orem—or "Bore-um" as Scott likes to call it—was greeted by an amazing sunrise, the type of sunrise immortalized in paintings of the desert West. What I would call some real John Wayne shit. Colors of atom bomb magnitude. Before a tool was ever lifted, the name *Nuclear Sunrise* was born. I wasn't there for the first ascent, but when I arrived a few days later to photograph Scott and Angela, my jaw dropped at the first sight of the route—the upper section of ice seemed bigger than a football field. I was hooked, and I knew there must be more—much more. From the bottom, climb thin slabs to steep bulges that create gaps in the ice that must be reached past with no feet—get your ice campus on! Belay when the ice gets fat and then take the icy football field to the top.

The Goulet

WI4 | 420 FEET

On the first ascent of this route, delaminating ice in the middle of the pitch that runs up this beautiful, shallow chimney/runnel system almost caused a catastrophe for first ascensionists Jesse Huey and Scott Adamson. After some rope and anchor shenanigans to get established on the route, I realized Scott was tied in but not on belay. He's strong and capable, but when the temps warmed and one crampon kick sent a six-foot section of ice flying down, we only had minutes before he would go down the feature like a summer waterslide. Luckily for all, I was able to rappel down, and at the end of the line, the last rung of my aider provided an angel from above. This photo was taken seconds prior, and only now do I notice the look of sheer and utter hopelessness in Scott's face. The French call a gully in the rock a *goulet*—another route that was named before a pick was ever swung.





To get to this massive snow ledge on the 380-foot *Flux Capacitor* (WI5+), one must lead 40 meters of thin WI5 ice, then from the ledge back up to the rim it's about 70 meters. This pitch starts off vertical on a thin curtain that's barely touching (think: small dagger), and then super-gentle climbing leads to easier terrain above. Near the top, the flow bifurcates and both the left and right options are about the same difficulty at WI3/4, with a dazzling shade of blue.

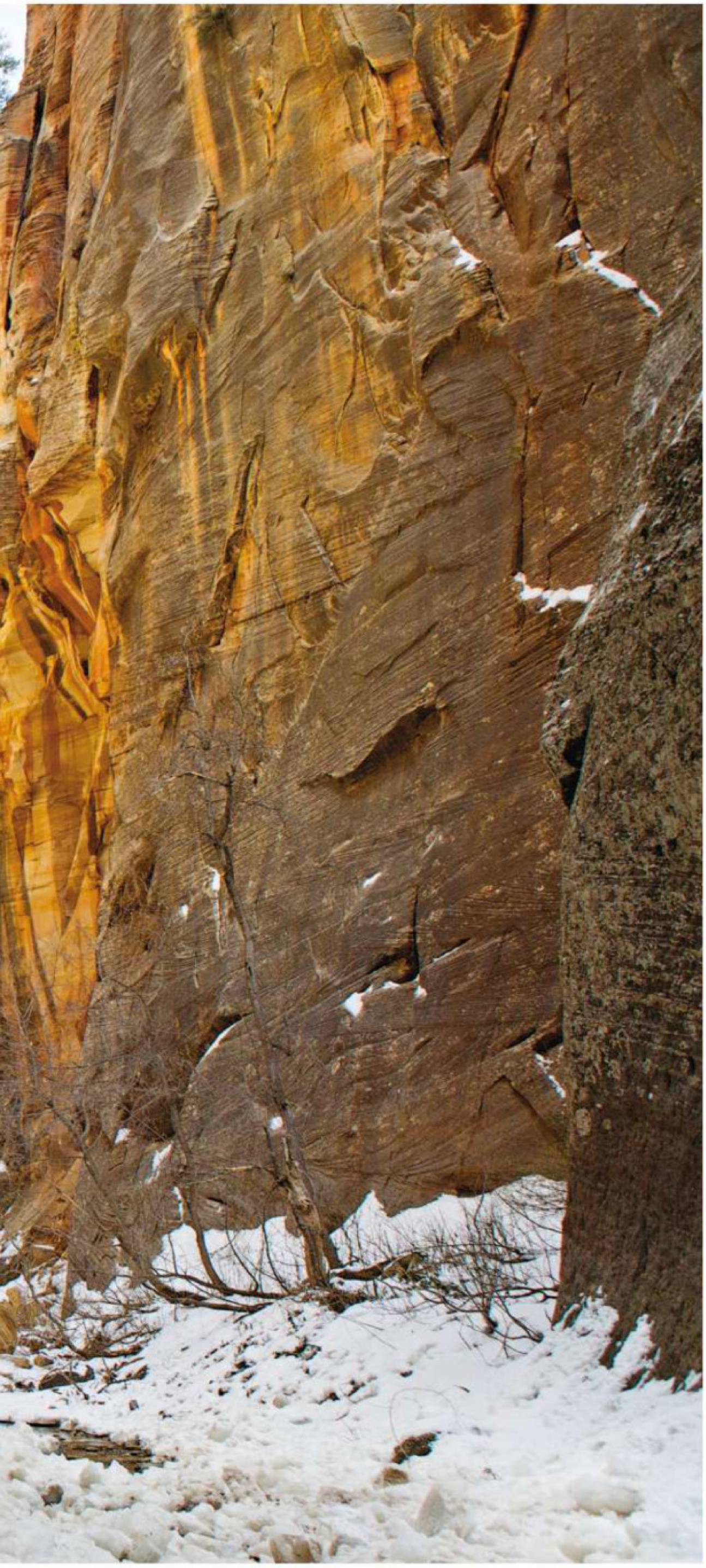


Scott Adamson gets to the good stuff near the top of *Nuclear Sunrise*, a 400-foot WI5 route FA'ed by Adamson, Angela Van Wiemeersch, and Matt Tuttle in early 2014.

Lower Marilyn

WI4 | 165 FEET

Walking around the outer reaches of Zion, my sense of discovery is a raw, visceral experience. I've spent time—too much time—stumbling about the desert looking for this exact thing and have come up empty nearly everytime. Hours turn into days, and we walk on. Rounding a corner and finding an ice flow draped over the rim and stretching to the canyon floor is a sight to behold, and not knowing it was there makes it even more special. This hanging slot canyon has bolted anchors for the summer folk, and during the FA, the top 60-meter column had baked in the sun, fallen off, and was laying useless in the bottom of the canyon. Thankfully, a rope was left fixed at the top to jumar back out. From the canyon bottom, a beautiful slabby flow travels up the wall and ends perfectly at the winter sun/shade line next to a bolted anchor. The complete 110-meter line will be a real prize.



Drivable in the summer, not so in the winter—this is the good (i.e., non-bushwhacking) part of the trail into Kolob Creek canyons.



I'll share a little secret with you: Finding fields of horsetail is the key to finding Zion ice.



Four-wheel drive, chains on all four tires, and a lead foot will get you through... most of the time.



Scott Adamson bravely takes a look at the few hundred feet of air and thin ice below him as he hucks a solo lap on *Nuclear Sunrise* (WI5).

The location of *Celestial Fraud* (WI5) is just above Kolob Creek, and it was named after an old, infamous canyoneering poster that purposely mislabeled the named waterfall Celestial Falls in order to hide the real location of the canyon and rappel.

Corn on the Kolob

WI4 | 80 FEET

With borrowed tools, an oversized jacket, and hand-me-down gloves, Angela is the type of climber who gets it done with whatever is available—we're talking MacGyver's daughter here. She's more than just bold and can hold her own with the boys—hell, she climbs better than most of the men I know. It seems like she can hold on forever, or maybe time just stands still as you watch the graceful beauty of her movement. On this particular day, we rapped down into this slot slightly above the raging water that was splashing up just enough to reach our heels. We built a belay, and she took the lead—not by roshambo or some offer of pity by her partner—she took it, and she owned it. It was her lead, she knew it, and she wanted it. As a matter of fact, she always wants the sharp end. Be careful, boys!



GET MORE!

Beehive Ice: A Guide to Utah's Ice and Mixed Climbs **by Nathan Smith & Andrew Burr ($40, pullpublishing.com)**

American Cancer Society

CLIMBER

How one Colorado-based nonprofit uses rock climbing to help young cancer survivors live again

Text and Photos by Julie Ellison

Appropriately nicknamed Crush doing what she does best

Sweat trickles down my back as I chalk up for the 30th time in half as many feet. It's pushing 90° on a cloudless day in Moab, and I'm wondering what the hell we were thinking coming to the desert in early September. Most climbers wouldn't dare brave the oppressive heat and blasting sun to climb slabby sandstone three feet from the road—not without complaining at least—but despite the grueling conditions, I hear laughter over my shoulder and glance back to see ear-to-ear grins on nine people just happy to be outside. Nine people just happy to be alive.

"Raise your hand if you have cancer!" someone calls out to the dozen of us sitting around a huge kitchen table in La Sal, Utah. Surrounded by nine cancer survivors and fighters that I had met five minutes earlier, I wasn't quite sure how quickly to respond as someone who has never had cancer.

It was day one of a week-long climbing trip in Moab with First Descents (FD), a Denver, Colorado–based nonprofit that provides free climbing, kayaking, and surfing trips to young adult cancer survivors in order to help them defy their diagnoses, reclaim their lives, and connect with others who are going through the same thing. I was tagging along to document the experience, so I knew everyone there had battled the disease at some point, but I wasn't sure what the attitude toward the C-word would be. Would we all—survivors and cancer-free folks alike—be lighthearted about it, discussing it casually with laughter and jokes, or would it be a heavy, sobering conversation only to be shared by those intimate with the disease's fury? One of the lead staffers was trying to get a head count of campers, so I sat back and tried to go unnoticed. Immediately someone with a hand high in the air yelled, "I knew she didn't have cancer—her hair's too long!" Time froze and my cheeks flushed when Boots, a 39-year-old mother of two, gave me a friendly nudge and the whole table broke out in hysterical laughter. Relief flooded my brain as I prepared for one hell of an eye-opening week.

One of the first things anyone learns about First Descents is that they're all about nicknames. Once you show up at camp, whether you're a staffer, volunteer, or a camper, you have only a few minutes to self-prescribe your own nickname, or you're likely to get dubbed with an odd moniker, something that's probably embarrassing and off-putting to hear when it's yelled at you while you're climbing 60 feet up a wall. It wasn't until our fifth day at camp—when I had already felt someone's prosthetic breasts, heard a story about pooping after being so constipated from pain meds that you fill the toilet and have to move to the tub, and watched a beautiful girl lie down on the ground and spray scorpion venom from Cuba up her nose as a form of treatment—that I learned a single participant's real name. Yes, the nicknames are fun and silly, but it serves another more important purpose: Using a new moniker offers these cancer survivors a chance to leave behind their old life as "Jill who has cancer," and be whoever they want—totally label-free—for a week. It helps mark the beginning of a new life, post-cancer, one that doesn't have the same stigma and negativity of past experiences. So to that end, I will honor FD's tradition and use only nicknames in this story. (I'm Peanut, by the way.)



Boots figures out how to fingerlock at the Ice Cream Parlor.



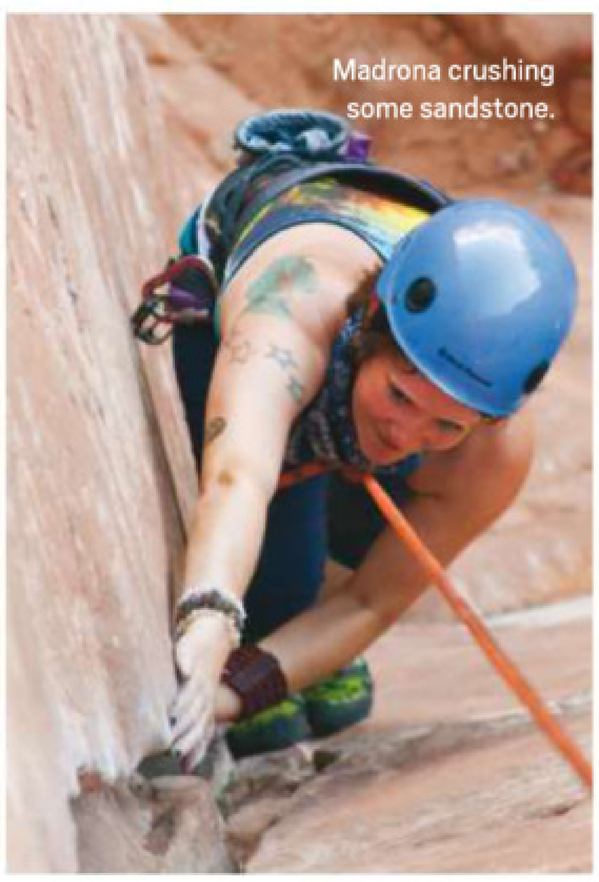
Guide Hollywood raps off Looking Glass Rock.

"Cancer is the easy part because you're so focused on it and that's all that matters. It's post-cancer life that sucks."
—MADRONA

In my 28 years of living, my only experience with cancer had been two grandmothers who both passed away from the disease and one close family friend who was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 35. Since my grandmothers were older and our family friend overcame her hard-fought battle, my misinformed view of cancer was that you either beat it and you live, or it beats you and you die. What I didn't know is that it's like a weed that can continue to plague your body, popping up years later even though you might have squashed it once, twice, three times before. Some of the participants had been battling cancer for years and years, in and out of the hospital, spending days, weeks, and months of their lives waiting for test results, hearing good news or bracing for bad news, and preparing for or recovering from surgeries, chemotherapy, and radiation. And with most of the participants heartbreakingly close to my own age, I couldn't wrap my mind around the fact that they sat here in the same place as me: college graduates, full-time jobs, families and friends, extensive travels, fun hobbies—the only difference is they had cancer and I did not. One camper was diagnosed in her junior year of engineering school, which she said "made classes very difficult and prevented me from doing things like an internship that would set me up for a good job in my field. I was busy having cancer when all my fellow young adult peers were living their normal lives." Through no fault of their own, this random disease had taken hold of their bodies, and for a good portion of their lives, it had ravaged them physically, mentally, and emotionally.

But like many of the campers echoed, the fight itself was almost easier than being labeled a "survivor." As one camper said, "After beating cancer, it's like, 'Oh, shit. What do I do now?!'" Another camper, 31-year-old Crush, said post-cancer life made her question her entire identity: "I was defined as a cancer patient for so long, but now I've finished my treatment, so who am I?" That's where First Descents comes in. These weeklong outdoor camps act as a catalyst to help young adults move past the label of "someone with cancer" and remember what it's like to be a "normal" young adult again. The activity options—climbing, surfing, and kayaking—offer them a chance to push themselves in a way that is rare in everyday lives filled with the frustrations of work and the stress of relationships. They've been told that they're fragile and broken for so long, and they've spent months surrounded by caretakers, so this physical and mental push helps build confidence and prove that, actually, they're not weak and frail. As a matter of fact, they've fought through one of the hardest experiences anyone could ever have to face, and they're much stronger for it. The motto of First Descents is "Out Living It," which I took to mean two things: 1) simply being active outside and living life to the fullest, and 2) beating, or "outliving," the disease and the lasting negative imprint it can leave.

Founded in 2001 by professional kayaker Brad Ludden, FD started with just a few kayaking trips a year, but it grew rapidly and the organization has since added surfing and climbing to the activity roster. These sports are not only fun and take you to exotic places, but they are also appropriately challenging for first-timers. What I realized is that climbing in particular is an ideal mix of a physical and mental challenge that forces campers to put aside the conundrum of post-cancer life. By day two of climbing on our Moab trip, many grinning campers proudly displayed their bruised shins and bloodied fingers as proof that their bodies aren't frail any more. "Having cancer, especially at an age where I was supposed to be healthy and full of vitality, took away my ability to trust that my body won't fail me," 31-year-old Jupiter said about being diagnosed with colon cancer at 26. "Every time I go to the doctor to get a blood test or a scan, I am convinced it will have come back, even now four years out. Being able to crush huge rocks and push past the difficult climbs gave me back some sense that my body is mine again. Every time I made it to the top, I would look down and remember the times I slept on my couch because my body didn't have the strength to make it up the single flight of stairs to my bedroom or the times I was unable to take my dog for a walk."


Madrona crushing some sandstone.


A team heads up Looking Glass Rock on Graduation Day.

"I think it's nice to be scared of something... else."
—JUPITER

Despite having zero prior climbing experience, battling a fear of heights, and being a self-admitted city girl, Big A is always the first to volunteer for climbing, rappelling, belaying—you name it, she'll jump at the chance to be first. But her motives lack the bravado and egotism that can get newer climbers in trouble. Instead, she takes the guides' instruction very seriously, asks tons of questions, moves across the rock carefully and deliberately, and allows herself to show fear and emotion when she gets scared. It's the type of bravery and "not give a crap about what other people think" mentality that I can't help but admire. And for her, as well as the other campers, the psychological aspect of climbing is just as important as the physical. Climbing forces you to focus in so fully on what you're doing right at that very moment that everything else just sort of falls away. You can't make a grocery list or go through the talking points of your next work meeting while climbing, and similarly, you can't dwell on your recent radiation treatment or fret about your checkup next week while gripping small holds 100 feet off the ground. You have to live so completely in the moment that nothing else matters. One camper said she

is used to thinking about her cancer a few dozen times a day because everything in her life has revolved around it for so long, and it's still such a prevalent part of who she is. Climbing provided a blissful freedom from that obsessively negative and hesitant thought, opening up room for joy and positivity about the future: "This is the first time I've felt sincerely and purely joyful and happy," said Crush, who came to camp less than three weeks after finishing her last radiation treatment for aggressive breast cancer.

"Life is so fun! The ability to be up and moving around and climbing on a rock is pretty amazing."
—COCONUTS

In 2009 at age 29, Coconuts started having headaches that made it feel like her head was going to explode: "I lost vision and thought maybe I had somehow died, that a tree limb had landed on me, that my head had been crushed like a pumpkin. It felt like I was hovering over my own broken, pained body. I was conscious, but unable to sense anything around me—a black hole." When the headaches continued for two more days, she went to see a doctor who refused to authorize an MRI scan. She insisted and got the scan 24 hours later; an hour after the scan the doctors called her in a state of pure panic—she had a huge mass in her brain and needed more scans immediately. A few days after that, she had a partially awake craniotomy, a surgery where she was put to sleep, her skull was sawed open, and then she was woken back up to perform a series of tests with electrodes on her brain, which help separate the tumor from healthy brain tissue. She was then put back to sleep while surgeons cut out the tumor, which they later diagnosed as an infiltrating astrocytoma.

Thirty-six hours after surgery, Coconuts began deteriorating. She was not able to communicate and had no control over her body, not even her eyelids, although she was aware of what was going on around her. When doctors investigated this trapped state she was in, they found a myriad of issues, each of which could have been fatal by itself. "When I woke up from [the second] surgery, I couldn't speak more than a one-syllable word, grip things, or move my right side. My brain was horribly swollen, and it made me ridiculously simple-minded," she says. "The nurses told my family that I would never read again, or walk well, certainly never run. They said I would be 'simple' for life." Not the type to take no for an answer, Coconuts, with the help of her parents and her husband, Dan, started to relearn the alphabet, and after 10 months of speech and physical therapy, learned how to read again, as well as use a fork and a toothbrush. Five months after that, Coconuts ran in a 10k with hundreds of other people.

Within six months of the surgeries, the brain tumor had started to grow back, but Coconuts couldn't comprehend what was going on because of her minimal cognitive function. Doctors gave her no viable options—radiation, chemo, and surgery wouldn't help or weren't possible—and trying alternative diets and supplements did nothing for her; the tumor continued to grow. After being rejected from a trial study in the U.S., Coconuts traveled to Germany where she started dendritic cell therapy, and a few months later she started taking Escozul, a nasal spray that comes from scorpion venom. She also added off-label drugs that were proven to have an effect on gliomas (the parent classification of infiltrating astrocytomas), and with those treatments, Coco has been able to keep her tumor at bay for more than two years. "My doctors don't use the term 'remission' for brain cancer because they say it always comes back, but I *feel* like I'm in remission," she says. "Originally, I was given 4.5 years to live, and if we went by their projections, I should already be dead by now."

The gift of these FD trips is not only a motivational tool for getting past the scar that cancer leaves, it's also meant to be an unencumbered, just-plain-fun experience for people who seemingly got the short end of the stick. That's why FD provides food, lodging, guiding, equipment, and everything else at no cost to the participants; the only cost campers incur is the cost of transportation to camp, and FD provides numerous scholarship and fundraising opportunities so everyone has a shot at attending. Each participant must be medically cleared by FD's own board of physicians well in advance of the trip, and there's always at least one medical professional at every camp, whether it's a doctor, nurse, or emergency medical technician. Many campers suffer from various symptoms during their FD experience, including neuropathy (numbness on one side of the body as a result of chemotherapy), limited mobility, and seizures, and several of them are still in active treatment or recently finished, which comes with other health issues. Coconuts says, "I assumed I wouldn't be able to participate in all of the activities because of my meds, which must be kept refrigerated and administered every four hours. Instead, for the first time since starting my treatments, I wasn't alone. I wasn't the weird girl taking her medicine, or the girl stuck at home missing out on life."


Kiss takes in the view on the rappel off Looking Glass Rock.


Big A celebrates topping out with guide Double.

"When I first arrived at the airport, I was filled with fear. I was afraid of dying, afraid I didn't know who I was any more, afraid others wouldn't understand me. But most of all I was afraid I wasn't going to be able to make it up that rock."

—CRUSH

"Just a little bit farther, Crush. C'mon, fight for it!" I yell down to the petite but fierce girl from Michigan. I am positioned above her on a challenging 5.10 at Potash Road in Moab to shoot some pictures, and as it turns out, spray beta and give encouragement on the hardest route that anyone would attempt on the trip. Searching for the next hold, Crush turns her face up to me and all I see in her piercing blue eyes is an intense drive and motivation that sends chills down my spine, despite the heat. She does some elegant footwork that took me five years of climbing to master—it's her third day climbing, ever—before she reaches up, latches the hold, grunts a little, and pulls through with everything she has to get to the last few easy moves. Relief, satisfaction, joy, and accomplishment flood her face as she tops out, and although she fought exceptionally hard to get to the top of that route, I can tell that battle is nothing compared to other battles she's fought.

Most of the participants arrived with little to no climbing experience, and out of that lack of experience came a feeling common to both climbing and cancer—fear. Whether it was a fear of heights, the unknown, or failure, everyone got to camp scared of something, but it quickly became clear that many of the campers were refreshed by feeling the healthy, life-affirming fear that climbing provides, instead of the dark and hopeless fear that cancer evokes. Every day at the crag, all nine campers would put on their climbing shoes, tie in, and fight with every fiber of their being to get to the top of the wall. The unanimous reactions to reaching the chains on every route, whether it was 5.5 or 5.10, were the most victorious smiles I have ever seen on a person—more alight than any 5.15 climber you'd see in a big-screen climbing flick.



Coconuts is one hell of a fighter—on and off the rock.

Over the course of five days, I watched the whole crew go from hesitantly stepping up to climb and nervously tying figure eights, faces tight with tension, to cracking jokes 65 feet off the ground in the middle of hard moves, getting right back on after big falls, and jumping at the chance to try the most difficult routes on the wall. As Crush wrote in a post-trip blog post, "[Getting to the top of the hardest climb] was a turning point in my climbing experience. I no longer looked up and wondered if I could do it. I looked up and wondered how I would do it." In my 12 years as a climber, it was hands-down the most inspirational group of climbers I've ever pulled down with. No one cared—or even asked once—about grades. No one cursed their own performance or got down on themselves when they couldn't do something. No one complained about the weather (it was 90° every day) or their skin or the rubber on their shoes not being sticky enough. Every moment of every day was met with huge smiles and constant laughter. When was the last time you had a climbing day like that? I can honestly say that I never had one before the trip or have had one since.

"I don't feel weird for the first time in a long time. Everybody gets me here, and that's a special thing."

—COCONUTS

Connecting young adult cancer survivors to each other is another huge part of FD's mission. It's a healing experience to be able to share your most embarrassing, grossest, and sometimes hilarious episodes with others who have experienced the same thing. Everybody wants to be understood, and the camps create an environment of honesty and sharing that only a fellow cancer survivor can comprehend. "I had finally found myself in a place where I was understood and could understand," Crush wrote, "where my stories were not the exception but the norm." This connection also builds a level of trust that many of these campers have lost from their dealings with cancer; several had been burned by bad doctors in the past and deserted by friends and even family members in their time of need. Climbing fits into that trust-building space, too, because you must trust that your belayer will keep you safe and that your climbing partners are looking out for you. "In order to survive, I had been forced to take my health into my own hands; I had to rely on myself," Coconuts pointed out. "But with climbing, you become glued emotionally to those around you, because you are forced to trust and rely on others.... You cannot manage alone." Because of this attitude, friendships formed fast, and after day two, my face was more sore from smiling and laughing than the rest of my body was from actually climbing. Nobody



The whole group on a rest-day hike to Delicate Arch.

took anything too seriously, and these tough and wide-eyed newbies, who had not too long ago faced the darkest of days, woke up every morning with a pep in their step and a huge grin on their face. Jupiter described it quite poignantly as "a feeling of energy and connection between the nine of us cancer survivors that was palpable the moment we all arrived at camp." A stranger walking up to the constantly chuckling group might have thought we were a bunch of best friends reuniting after 10 years apart, who just also happened to be the test group for a new seratonin-laced happy pill.



Big A's smile after reaching the chains could light up any room.

"Just shut up and go do it."

—MADRONA

What I realized on this trip is that we as climbers are really good at giving back—to ourselves. With our own nonprofits like the Access Fund and the American Alpine Club, yes, you can volunteer your time or money to build trails, keep crags open to climbing, and erect portapotties in parking lots, but in the end, doesn't that just serve us as climbers better? Doesn't that goodwill just get recycled back into the small climbing community that already exists? What if we put that time and effort into helping a group outside ourselves—imagine what our smart, competent, and hard-working tribe could accomplish.

Before coming to Moab, Madrona, a spunky firecracker of a young woman, had been struggling with her intense and strenuous job at an animation studio because of "chemo brain," a common and lasting symptom from chemotherapy toxicity that involves changes in cognitive abilities, like difficulty remembering small details or keeping track of time. "I'm used to being a cannonball, a bull, blasting through my day with aplomb. It's hard to reconcile who I was with who I am right now," she says. "I left Moab feeling like the powerhouse I once was, with a bunch of dirt-covered, tough-minded, tender-hearted ass-kickers in my corner." Only a few weeks after returning to her home in Portland, Oregon, her employer let her go because she was inconsistent at work. When faced with this drawback, she channeled the strength she gained from her week with FD (after a good, hard cry in the car, she says) and made "the kind of decisions I would make climbing a crack. Thoughtful, deliberate decisions, working out what felt right, even though it wasn't obvious or expected." Through a Facebook group dedicated to our FD camp, Madrona told fellow participants of her unemployment and decision to pursue her passions of writing and painting. "The response I got was encouraging, affirming, and true. It was exactly the response I knew I would get from everyone, these people who saw me so clearly in just one week of climbing together."



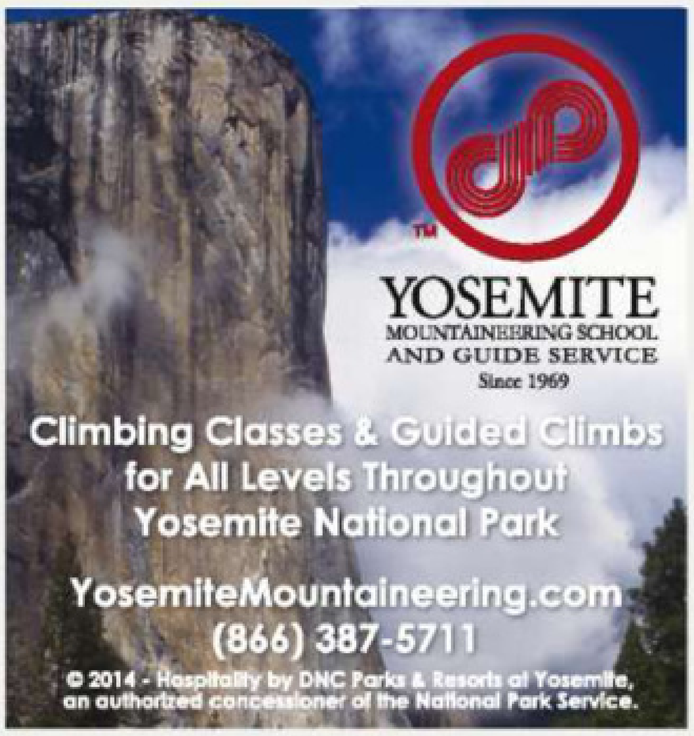
Jupiter gives it her all on the hardest route of the camp.

COURTESY

Organizations like FD improve lives by exposing people who need it most to this awesome but equally difficult thing we call climbing. Through those experiences, participants break out of their "cancer survivor" shell and realize the ability to choose their own label—including maybe even calling themselves a climber. More than half of the campers have climbed since the trip, and a few of them have purchased rock shoes and climbing gym memberships. Now, when I'm getting frustrated that I can't do a move or I keep falling, I tell myself that in the grand scheme of things, climbing doesn't matter. It's just this great hobby that gives me great exercise, lets me be outside, takes me to cool places, and allows me to hang out with my friends. I mean, climbing doesn't cure cancer, right? But on this trip, I realized that maybe climbing can help people in a bigger way. That's what I saw during my week in Moab with First Descents. I saw people who had overcome one of the greatest killers in modern times fall in love with our sport, not just because it's a fun way to pass the time, but because it gave them a way to continue fighting back and to regain control of their lives from this vicious disease. To outlive it, and be out living it.

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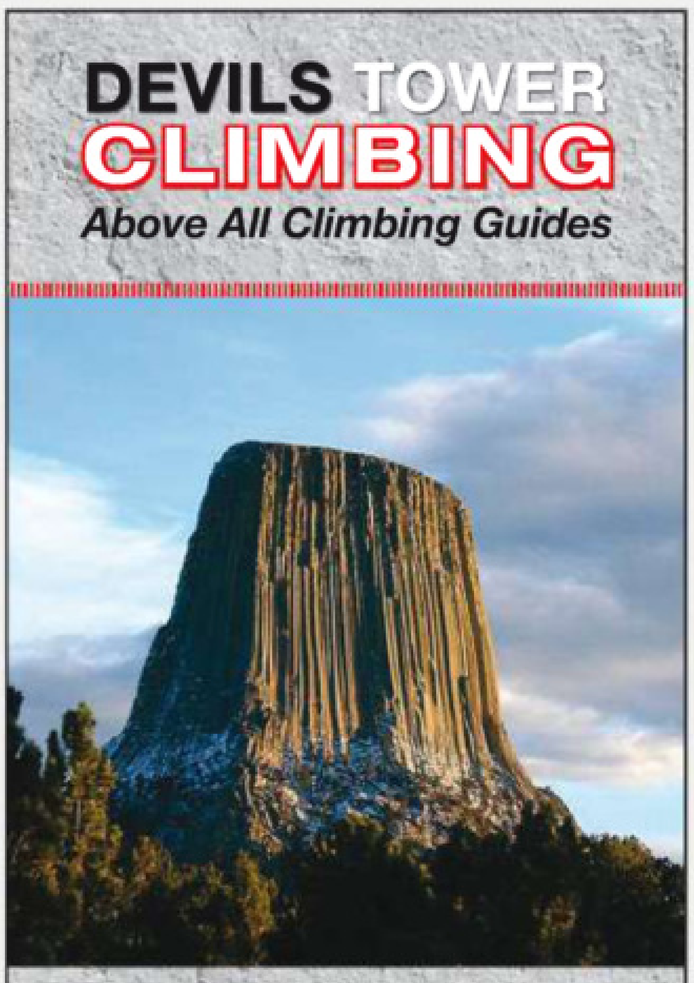
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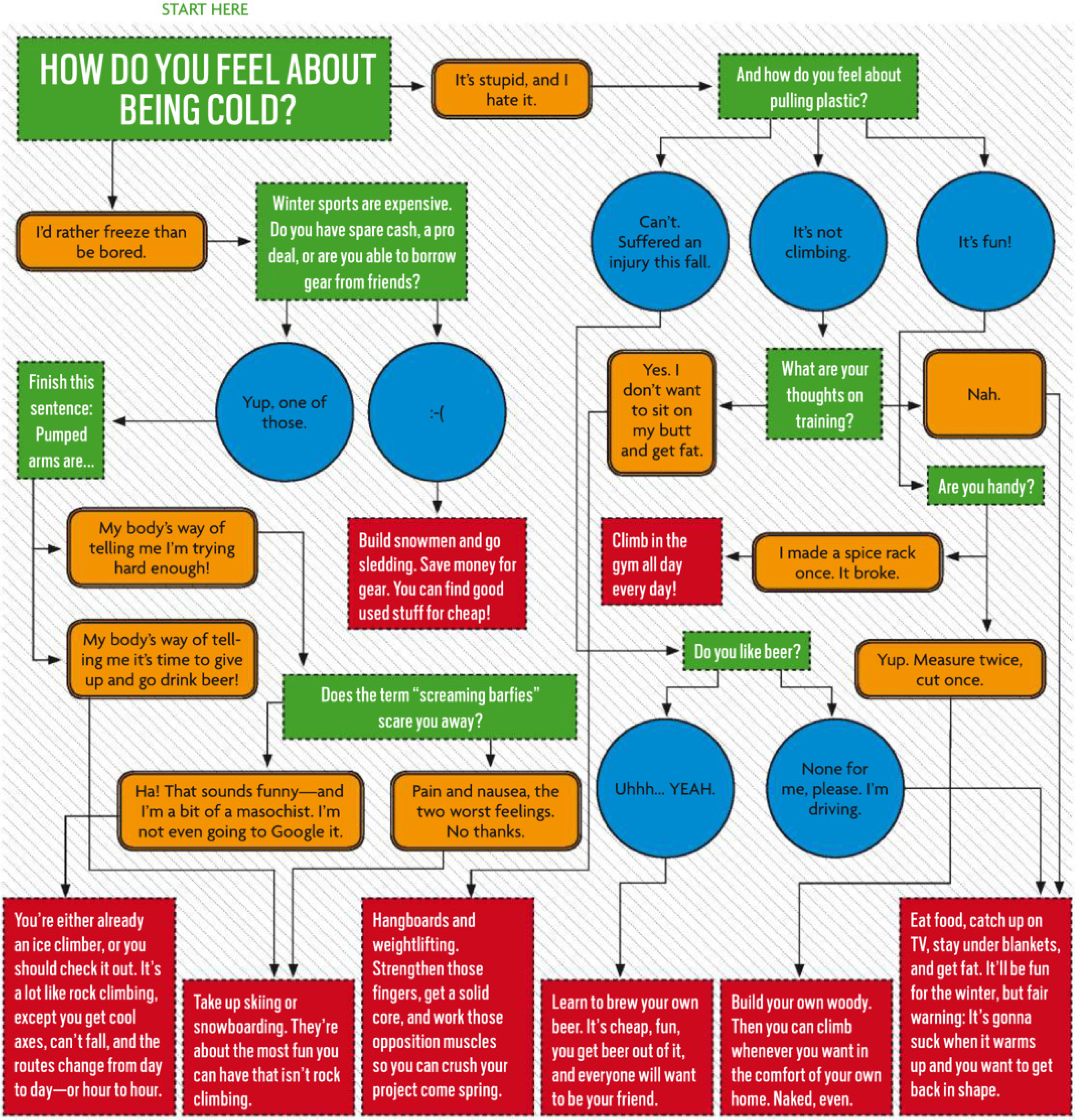
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THE FLOW

How should you spend your winter?

BY KEVIN CORRIGAN

TEMPERATURES HAVE DROPPED. The landscape has been painted a beautiful shade of white. Couples are enjoying the après ski scene in front of warm fires across the country. That's right, it's that terrible time of year when you can't rock climb in a tank top. Screw you, winter. It doesn't matter how many hand warmers or hot rocks you stuff in your chalkbag, unless you road trip to Hueco Tanks or Joshua Tree (or Tucson, p. 28), it's going to be a while before you really enjoy another outdoor pitch. But things aren't as grim as they may seem. Spring will come, and until then, use this guide to figure out the best use of your time.



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Bill Morse suits up for a larger than life burn on "California 5.12", a steep and thuggy 12c at Red Rock Canyon, Nevada Photo: Ben Moon